

NUMENÉRA

LEGACY CONTENT



BY MONTE COOK



Seskii (page 258) can be formidable foes, but also make fiercely loyal companions.

Slying is a common term used to convey a combination of lying and sly. While mostly derogatory, it also carries a hint of respect for someone's skills at deception.

FASTEN

If you grew up in a small village or have ever visited one, you probably know everything you need to know about Fasten. A typical village among typical villages, Fasten has a population of approximately 500 people, most of whom are craftsmen, merchants, and farmers.

Most business takes place on the city's two main roadways—Carryon Street and Best Avenue—which angle toward each other. Houses, while small, clean and well maintained, are typically constructed of whatever hodgepodge assortment of materials is handy from the nearby woods, local quarries, and reclaimed buildings.

Fasten is a town that works hard to appear picturesque; there is little obvious crime or political strife. A general spirit of helping one another seems to keep misconduct and poverty down. However, as with any gathering of two or more people, there are always petty arguments, family in-fights, and fisticuffs on the streets. Most people are kept in line by the fact that their parents and teachers still live in the village, and they're regularly reminded not to bring shame upon themselves or their elders. For larger concerns, Mayor Adroa Vallone and her half-dozen well-trained watchmen do the job, ideally before anyone notices.

ABOUT TOWN

Cali's Trinket Cart: At the intersection of Carryon Street and Best Avenue, you'll find Cali and her trinket cart, piled high with scraps of metal and synth, bits of the numenera, and an impossible jumble of unknown items. Cali is quick to smile, and her laugh is so loud it can be heard from down the street. If you ask where the trinket cart is, you'll often be told to follow the laughter. This task is even easier because Cali's companion, a speckled grey-green seskii who never leaves her side, often howl-growls along with her. Cali encourages potential buyers to climb onto the cart and sort through the items. Additionally, she seems to have a nearly perfect memory of the objects in her cart; if someone comes to her with a specific need, she usually knows whether she has the item in question. If so, she'll reach her hand into the jumble and pull it out. Cali is also a fixture at the rubar races, and she raises some of the finest rubars in town. Those who wish to learn about rubar training and breeding might entice her to share her secrets.

Loose Leaf: Run by Sister Twia, Loose Leaf is the town's apothecary and healing center. The large, roomy space is perhaps the biggest on Carryon Street. The front room is lined with shelves, boxes, and tables loaded with fresh and drying herbs, a variety of teas and spices, and liquid mixtures of various colors and consistencies. Sister Twia keeps

a constant fire to produce hot water for the tea that she offers free of charge to all who walk in the door.

The back room of Loose Leaf is filled with cots, many of which are occupied at any given moment by those who are too ill to be cared for in their homes. Two or three men in yellowed garb care for the wounded, and family members are often seen at the bedsides, weeping for those who have passed despite the quality of care.

Sister Twia does not condone the power of the numenera; in fact, she believes it's counterproductive to the healing process. If you enter Loose Leaf with obvious numenera on your person, she'll ask you to leave it outside the door or vacate the premises.

Adorne: At Adorne, a simple covered stall with a permanent place on Carryon Street, you'll find baubles, trinkets, small metalworkings, buttons, and beads. Most of the items are stuffed into barrels and boxes, with only the very special and most expensive offerings set apart. In order to see these exclusive objects, you must ask Yann, the owner, to show them to you. He'll eye a customer for a long time to get a sense of the person before he trusts her enough to reach beneath his long coat and bring out a bag of special items. Be sure not to drop your gaze beneath his stare, or he might consider you a slying son of a thief and try to hit you with the knotty redwood cane he always carries.

You can pick through the barrels and haggle for the price of one particular piece, or you can purchase the baubles in bulk for cheap. In the latter case, you must take whatever combination of worth and junk your cup scoops up from the deep barrels.

SweetMeats: Tucked between the apothecary and the jeweler, SweetMeats is a combination butcher and bakery, run by married couple Abeke and Serwa. The two-story building uses the ground floor as shop and storage and the top floor as living space for the two women.

Open six days a week, SweetMeats does a booming business. Here, visitors find all available meats of the region, wild and domestic, fresh and cured, many brought in from hunters, fishers, and farmers just that morning. Abeke's meat selection is rivaled only by that of Serwa's wide variety of baked goods, including her town-famous specialty—puffins, a handheld, meat-filled pastry that can be purchased two for a shin and tucked into the pocket for a later meal.

As you might imagine, the store has an odd combination of scents and sights, as fresh cuts of meat rest side by side with pies and breads. Even the women are a study in contrast, with Abeke's stout,



Fasten



ruddy form wielding a careful knife for the best cuts of meat while Serwa, a pale wisp of a thing, pounds dough on the counter. The quality of the products is so high—and the witty exchanges between Abeke and Serwa are so funny—that all other butchers and bakeries have died away from lack of customers.

The General Store: Upon entering the General Store, located along Best Avenue, you'll be greeted with a surly hello from shop owner Fletcher Elis. Despite his demeanor, which some would call short and others just plain rude, Fletcher is willing and eager to help customers find and purchase goods. "It's the pain in my bad leg that makes me so damn surly," is something he says regularly. "Not that I'm angry with you. I hardly know you." He then regales any listening ear with the tales of how he came by his limp and his off-putting demeanor. (These tales vary in the telling, sometimes involving his time with the Redfleets, other times recounting a sordid affair of how he was injured while rescuing his wife from a band of abhumans. It might be important to note that no one in town has ever seen Fletcher's alleged wife.)

Thanks to the efforts of two local brothers, Tam and Tale, who started working for Fletcher when they were mere boys and have now become handsome, strapping young men, the General Store is a well-

organized marvel of modern conveniences and supplies. In addition to foodstuffs, visitors will find torches, glowglobes, rope, and the occasional used book. A few years ago, at the behest of the villagers, Fletcher started offering home deliveries. Tam or Tale drop off the goods at a customer's home for the additional price of 1 shin. Although the deliveries always take longer than Fletcher expects, considering that the houses are not far from the store, the brothers are in such demand from a variety of customers that he continues to offer the service.

Redwood Chests: The village's carpentry store offers not just chests but furniture, carts, and staffs as well. The place is owned by one of the town's few nobles, but most villagers know that the real heart of the enterprise is carpenter Mollie Behar. She clearly loves her work, producing fine pieces quickly and at fair prices. Mollie believes that each piece she creates should be built especially for its future owner, so few items are actually for sale on the floor. Mostly, the store serves as a workspace for Mollie and a storage space for wood, pieces in progress, and Mollie's large, drooling canine named Rokit. She occasionally takes on apprentices, but she finds that most of them can't hear the wood the way they need to in order to turn it into something beautiful.

"I knew the Amber Papacy was close to its goal of complete control when I toasted a slice of bread and saw the Order of Truth's symbol appear in its center." ~Narada Trome, anti-papist

Rubar races are a common activity in Fasten. Anyone can place bets of a shin or more at the Spotted Seskii.

When children aren't sitting in the schoolhouse or throwing stones at fish in the pond at the town circle, they are often found at Redwood Chests, getting drooled on by Roxit while they watch Mollie lathe and hammer wood.

Fasten Schoolhouse: The schoolhouse is tucked between Redwood Chests and the Village Hall. Classes for all ages are taught by Benham Ilk, a giant of a man who uses humor and a gentle touch. If you were to look in on the children in the middle of class, you might assume by the chaos that the kids had overrun their teacher and staged a revolt. Yet Benham remains at the head of it all, encouraging them. However strange his teaching methods, students come home talking of all they've learned and are able to put it to use. At the back of the schoolhouse, a tiny room with an exterior door serves as the town library, offering scrolls, skrips, maps, and the occasional book, all free for the borrowing.

Town Circle: The town circle is a place for gatherings, large meetings, and general festivities. Surrounded by a grove of fruit-bearing trees, the circle is soft moss and gravel, with stone benches placed here and there for maximum shade advantage. At the center is a large pond filled with bright blue fish. On any given day, you might find families gathering for picnics, teenagers trying to kiss each other beneath the trees, or children sticking their fingers into the pond.

On the east side of town is the meeting house, an open-air pavilion used for village meetings, large celebrations, and rainy days.

The Spotted Seskii: This full-service restaurant and pub is the largest building in Fasten, and the one where people gather most often. It's run by the husband-and-wife team of Bakele and Eder Crandel, along with six staff members. Bakele, a spry woman of average size and height, sports green hair and a green apron, and she wears dark green glasses even in the dim light of the tavern. Everyone knows her by her warm and friendly demeanor—and her willingness to sing a song or six when the crowd calls for it. Her husband, Eder, although taller and wider, is far quieter and less noticeable. He often works among the crowd for hours before someone notices his presence and remembers that he's the co-owner of the place. Eder doesn't seem to mind, however, and is quick to downplay any perceived slights.

The food at the Spotted Seskii is mediocre but filling, and the drinks are expensive but strong. Yet most are willing to pay the prices in exchange for the wide variety of entertainment that their shins can purchase. Each night, the Seskii offers diners and drinkers a mix of activities to entertain the crowd, including live music, games of gambling and chance, singing contests, and dart throwing.

The most popular activity by far is the pub's rubar race, which takes place nearly every night in a back room reserved for that purpose. The room is divided into two parts: one large section for the gamblers and viewers, and a smaller section for each of the competing rubars (usually four, but sometimes as many as six). The floors of the rubar sections are coated in a layer of dead matter. The first rubar to clean up its area by eating all of the dead matter wins the round and goes on to the next one the following night. Not surprisingly, raising and training rubars for these competitions is a favorite pastime among many in Fasten.

Inns: Fasten has no established inn since visitors are few and far between and mostly belong to one of the families already situated in the area. However, those seeking lodging might find a cot in the back of Loose Leaf (provided they're not all taken) for 1 shin a night.

Additionally, resident Tupon Villhelm is sometimes known to open her large house for guests at a cost. Tupon is nearly eighty years old and the mother of ten boys, all of them now dead. The brothers who work at the general store are her great-grandchildren, and they often keep an ear out for people who need temporary residence. Tupon's house has ten small, unused bedrooms, each available for 1 shin per night. Breakfast or dinner is an additional shin, but it's well worth the added cost.

Village Hall: The Village Hall is where the mayor and her watchmen work, grievances are aired, and lawbreakers are brought to justice. The ground floor is used as offices and a public courthouse, and the cellar serves as a temporary holding cell (when it's not flooded). During the rare periods of strong and continuous rains, anyone who breaks the law is held in one of the bedrooms in Tupon Villhelm's home. Although her food is of much higher quality, her guilt-inducing looks and comments are enough to make hardened criminals break down into tears. Even the mayor has noted that there appears to be a marked decrease in crime during the rainy season.



People of Interest

Keera Naraymis: Keera is a new staff member at the Spotted Seskii. She is slightly built, with nondescript reddish-brown hair pulled into a messy bun, but her vivid storytelling skills have endeared her to many patrons. However, those who pay close attention to Keera sense that something is slightly off. Part of it is her stories, which tell of times long past and of places that no longer exist. Part of it is the frequency with which her strange powers, similar to esoterics, seem to manifest, usually at inopportune times and beyond her control. When she's not slinging food and drink in the dim light of the Seskii, she studies in the back room of the schoolhouse, poring over books on the numenera.

Dziko: Dziko is seen around town regularly, often hanging out in the village meeting house or tossing bits of bread to the fish in the town circle. Tall and thin, with salt-and-pepper hair that hangs over his eyes, Dziko always carries a clay cup in one hand. At first glance, his scruffy appearance and well-worn clothes might give the impression that he is homeless or poor, but he is neither. Dziko owns a fairly large home just off of Carryon Street but spends little time there. If you ask around, you'll discover that his wife was killed by a fire in their home. Although many years have passed since her death, he has never been the same. He believes the cup he carries holds his wife's ashes, but if you were to look inside, you'd see that it was empty.

Tarlin: The mayor's daughter is in her late teens, and she's something of a spitfire, spending her money on shiny trinkets as well as dyes to turn her hair various shades of pewter and gold. Tarlin favors loud colors and snide sarcasm, and more often than not she sneaks into the late-night festivities at the Spotted Seskii. She can hold her liquor but not her tongue, and her mother fears often and loudly for her daughter's safety. Because Tarlin is everywhere in Fasten, she claims to know all of the nefarious happenings in the village and can be persuaded to part with her knowledge for the cost of a drink. When her information turns out to be true, which is less than half the time, it can be valuable.

FASTEN HEARSAY

Skulkers: Two men have been seen skulking around Cali's trinket cart in the evening hours, typically while she is off competing in the rubar races. Cali is offering 10 shins to the individual or party who tracks down the men and discovers their purpose in Fasten.

New in Town: A woman with short black hair and green eyes has just arrived in town. Going by the name Verenus (level 7), she claims to be a bounty hunter from Qi out to capture a dangerous Aeon Priest who betrayed the order many years ago.

Missing Man: One of Abeke's regular suppliers—a hunter who specializes in bringing her fresh meat from large wild animals in the region—hasn't been by her shop in nearly a week. Abeke knows he was heading southeast and is worried that something might have happened to him. She also needs to replenish her meat stocks and offers payment for any fresh, local wildlife that comes her way.



GM Intrusion: *There are more pallones than the characters initially thought—1d6 more creatures attack.*

Pallones are dislike creatures, ranging from 2 to 5 feet (0.6 to 1.5 m) across, and as thin as the thinnest blade. They reflect light, have no discernible features, and are semitransparent, similar to how a jellyfish looks in the water. When seen from the side, they are nearly invisible.

Pallones move through the Ninth World in a migratory pattern and can be found almost anywhere (assuming they can be seen at all). Typically, PCs can detect them by catching a glimpse of their surfaces gleaming in the sun. When in a natural state, the creatures bob along in the air aimlessly, much like balloons.

Motive: Hungers for blood

Environment: Found anywhere, pallones are almost always encountered in groups of two or more, and sometimes in groups as large as a dozen.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Combat: They attack by turning sideways and whirring at their opponent with their thin edge, which is sharp enough to cut nearly to the bone on a solid hit. The edge cannot cut through hardy materials like metal, so pallones aim for exposed areas like hands, necks, and faces.

When attacking in full sun, the glint from their surfaces can temporarily blind an opponent, who loses one turn if he fails a Speed defense roll. This is not an action on the part of the pallone.

Pallones land only if they kill prey, covering the body and draining it of blood.

Interaction: Pallones can't be reasoned with.

Use: A swarm of pallones can attack anywhere at any time.





GM Intrusion: A normal-sized rubar delivers a stunning shock even if only one barbel hits. A large rubar stuns a foe for 1d6 rounds.

Precariun is a hardy, drought-resistant herb that grows in highland regions. It must be dried before it is used or it kills the rubar that imbibes it. Dried or fresh, it is likely to give humans a severe stomach ache.

GM Intrusion: The sarrak, acting out of turn, takes control of a device that the character is about to use against it. The sarrak deactivates the device or perhaps turns it against its owner.

Modifications: Perception within long range as level 5, but beyond that, as level 2.

Combat: Rasters avoid danger and combat if possible. If they must fight, they prefer to use a long-range energy generator in their head that fires bursts of invisible energy (long range, 6 points of damage). They never fight to the death, as it is usually easy for them to escape by flying away.

Interaction: Sometimes rasters are encountered in the wild, nesting on rocky islands along the coast. More often, however, they are tamed, trained, and used as aerial mounts. Riders use sonic prods to control them.

Use: A small clutch of rasters has moved into a ruined keep not far from a small town. The mayor, who wants to refurbish and use the keep, seeks mercenaries to clear out the rasters. Meanwhile, local raiders have put the word out that they would pay well for any young rasters brought to them alive.

Loot: The biomechanical nature of a raster means that its body contains 1d6 – 2 cyphers (which also means that some bodies have none).

RAVAGE BEAR

4 (12)

A ravage bear is a hideous mammalian predator that hunts entirely by sense of smell. It is blind and nearly deaf, but it still tracks and senses prey easily. It is very protective of its young, and if hungry, it is extremely dangerous. Otherwise, it gives most creatures a wide berth.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Ravage bears dwell alone or in pairs (usually with a few cubs) in wooded, rocky, or mountainous areas, typically in cold or temperate climates.

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long

Modifications: Makes Might defense rolls as level 6. Runs, climbs and jumps as level 7.

Combat: The ravage bear grabs foes with its powerful arms, holds them fast, and then squeezes and tears at them until they are dead. It can hold only one creature at a time. While a ravage bear is holding a creature, it can attack only the held creature. In each round that a held creature does not escape, it suffers 4 points of damage in addition to damage from attacks made against it.

A ravage bear can move very quickly in short sprints. In combat, it can go into an insane fury and will fight to the death. If it takes 10 or more points of damage, its defense is reduced by one step, but its attacks are increased by one step.

Ravage bears are immune to visual effects, such as illusions. However, olfactory effects can confuse and “blind” it temporarily.

Interaction: Ravage bears are animals and act like animals.

Use: Ravage bears are likely chance encounters in the wilderness for unlucky travelers.



RUBAR

2 (6)

If a catfish lived on land, breathed air, and had six tiny legs, it would be a rubar. These fishlike creatures can grow as long as a man's arm, and they slither across surfaces using their legs and powerful tail. Like their sea-faring brethren, rubars eat dead matter from the surfaces of stone, synth, metal, and anything else they come across.

They have two to four sets of barbels. Using these long whiskers, rubars send electric charges into the air as a type of radar, helping them navigate the environment.

Motive: Self-defense

Environment: Anywhere that collects dead matter

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points



SCUTIMORPH

3 (9)



Scutimorphs look like huge brown centipedes or millipedes. Mostly passive, they prefer to defend without attacking. They spend most of their lives coiled around large tubes or trees, absorbing nutrients from whatever liquids and creatures get stuck to their sticky surfaces. Although they typically inhabit areas in groups, each scutimorph usually has its own tree or tube.

When the creatures stand, it's apparent that they have hundreds of legs, each as big around as a man's wrist. Their standing heights are 6 to 8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 m), and their bodies are typically twice that in length. Scutimorphs have a pair of large front pincers that protrude when the creatures feel threatened; these pincers deal 4 points of damage.

Motive: Self-defense

Environment: Temperate or warm woodlands (or similar areas)

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 6

Movement: Short

Modifications: Climbs as level 6. When coiled with only its exoskeleton exposed, defends as level 8.

Combat: When touched or attacked, a scutimorph's exoskeleton exudes a vaporous substance that makes the creature slippery. On a second attack, the substance turns sticky; anyone who touches the creature at this stage is stuck for one round (the victim loses his turn). If the scutimorph continues to be attacked, it rears up from its position coiled around the tree, its large front pincers seeking to damage the one who harmed it. If one scutimorph attacks, the others begin to respond as well, fighting as a group.

Interaction: Scutimorphs are large insects and behave as such.

Use: Scutimorphs inhabit many forests and semiforests of the Ninth World—anywhere there are vertical trunks, pipes, or other tall, round fixtures. They often obstruct the paths of explorers who are attempting to climb.

Loot: Scutimorphs are difficult to kill and don't offer much in the way of loot. However, those with knowledge of the numenera may find use for their oily or sticky substances, which exist in small glands beneath the exoskeleton.

GM Intrusion: *The scutimorph is tougher than others of its kind and has +10 health.*





CHAPTER 24

ADVENTURES OVERVIEW



GMs, of course, should feel free to modify anything in any of the adventures in order to make them work best with their players in their campaign.

PART 8: ADVENTURES PRESENTS FOUR NUMENERA ADVENTURES. EACH IS VERY DIFFERENT IN TOPIC AND STYLE AS WELL AS PRESENTATION.

THE BEALE OF BOREGAL (page 367) is meant to be a GM's first Numenera adventure. It is presented with as much advice and assistance as a new GM will need. It even comes with a flowchart that shows the course of the adventure. The flowchart is an example of how GMs might write up their own adventures—a few sentences are all you really need.

SEEDSHIP (page 379) is an area-based adventure in which the PCs explore a map however they choose. It shows how a GM can set up adventures without worrying about the order in which things happen. Players can explore location-based encounters in whatever order they wish. “Seedship” could be expanded into a much larger adventure.

THE HIDDEN PRICE (page 385) is an urban adventure with investigation, double-dealing, and criminal intrigue. It is potentially very open-ended and

assumes that a GM can ad-lib NPCs and situations as they arise. It shows that not every adventure in the Ninth World must be centered around the past. This setting and game handles all sorts of scenarios.

THREE SANCTUMS (page 390) is a grand adventure involving a maniacal organization and a plot that features potentially world-changing power. It spans a great deal of the northern Steadfast and requires a GM who can deal with a large organization and how it might react to threats from within and without. This adventure shows that in Numenera, you don't have to wait until the end of the campaign for the PCs to interact with powerful people, concepts, and discoveries.

These four adventures are only the beginning. The best adventures will be crafted by you, with your specific players and their characters in mind.



CHAPTER 25

THE BEALE OF BOREGAL



This adventure works well with beginning characters. In fact, it's a fine scenario to start a new campaign. It's presented in a style that gives new GMs (or at least GMs new to Numenera) some helpful hints about how to run the adventure. The beginning is designed so that the PCs have a reason to join together even though their backgrounds and character types might be very different.

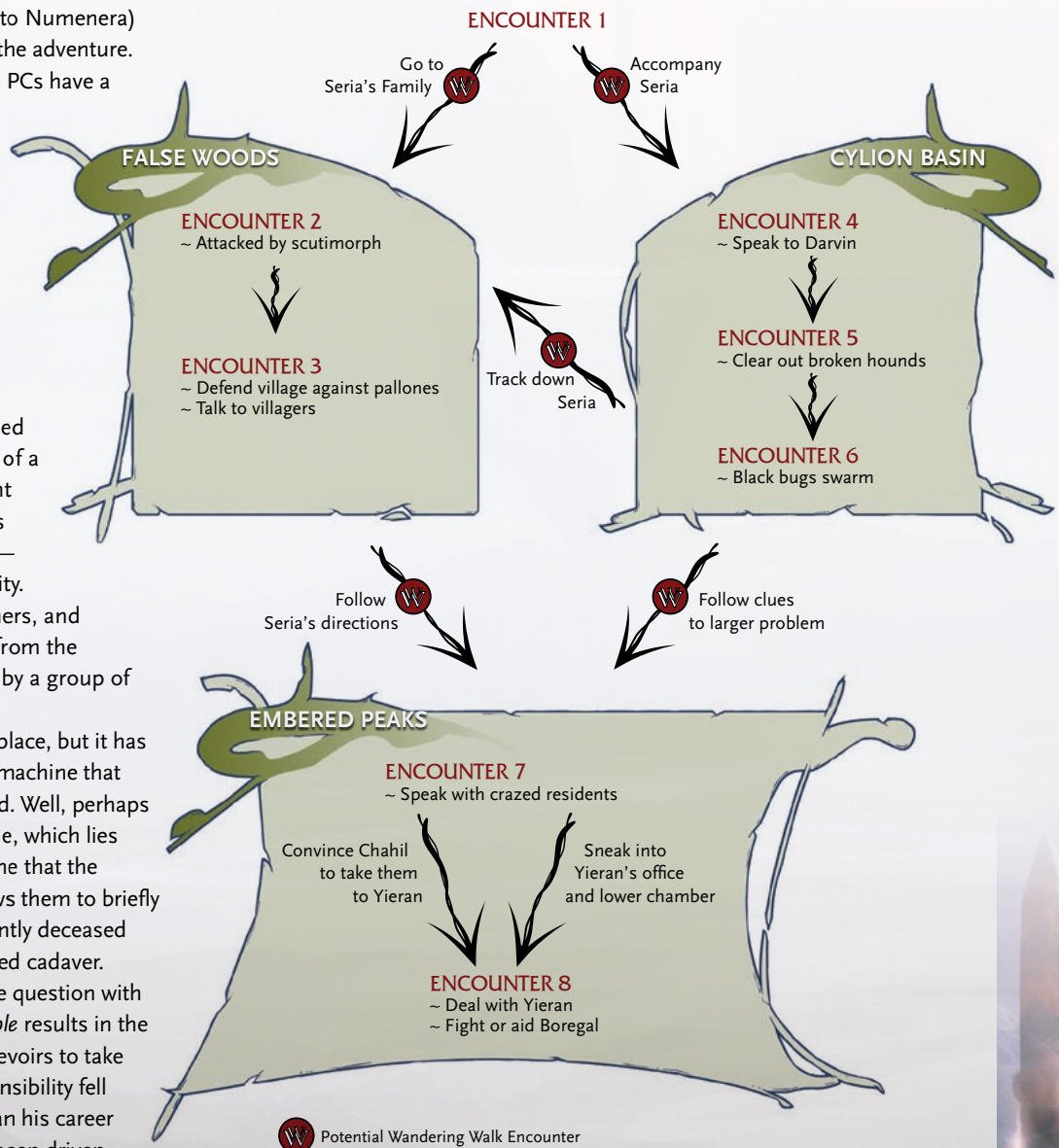
In "The Beale of Boregal," players will have the opportunity to explore unknown parts of the Ninth World while testing their motivations and their strength of conviction.

BACKGROUND

Far out in the Beyond lies a town called Embered Peaks. Nestled in the palm of a mountain range that looks like a giant seven-fingered hand—the dark peaks from which the town takes its name—Embered Peaks is a simple community. Inhabited mostly by merchants, farmers, and pilgrims seeking a few days' respite from the Wandering Walk, the town is headed by a group of priestlike magistrates called devoirs.

Embered Peaks might be a simple place, but it has something that no other town has: a machine that allows the residents to talk to the dead. Well, perhaps *talk* is too strong a word. This machine, which lies far beneath the ground and has a name that the townsfolk never dare to whisper, allows them to briefly connect to the brainwaves of the recently deceased and ask one question of the reanimated cadaver. Oddly, the cadaver always answers the question with a lie, which led to some ... *unpredictable* results in the early days of its use and caused the devoirs to take over the machine. Much of this responsibility fell to Magistrate Yieran, a man who began his career as a responsible citizen but who has been driven insane by the machine he hoped to control.

BEALE OF BOREGAL FLOW OF EVENTS



The Beyond, page 174

Peregrines, level 2

Scutimorph, page 257



Recently, there was contention among the *devoirs*, as some of them believed that the town would be better off if the machine could be made to actually raise the dead rather than have them answer a single question (and incorrectly at that). Embered Peaks could become a destination, they argued, a place where people would bring their dead and pay handsomely for the use of the machine. Other *devoirs* were not so sure, worrying that it would be an abuse of the machine—after all, who knows how it works or what powers it?—and would attract more than just good-hearted folks wanting a last conversation with their deceased loved ones. Fueled by the mind-altering effects of the machine, this conflict became ugly and, eventually, bloody.

As for the machine itself, its name is Boregal. Once a man with a *beale* (a genetic mutation that allowed him to touch the minds of others), he was reviled and feared by those around him. Shunned by his community and scared of his own power, Boregal allowed himself to be taken to the far edges of the world and shut into a holdfast deep in the earth. There he rested, turning year by year into something less man and more machine, his powers dormant and sealed from the world. At some point, however, the earth rose up or was worn away, and the machine came closer to the surface—close enough that Boregal's *beale* could restore dead brain cells to a semblance of life, if only for a few moments.

The experimentations of the *devoirs* awakened the machine and, with it, the man it once was. Scared, confused, and with no memory of how or why he arrived at this place, Boregal struggles against the holdfast. Not mindless, but neither mindful nor fully aware, he began to call out for help. Humans with *beales*—a fairly rare and often undetected genetic mutation—are affected, as are humans and creatures who are susceptible to mental suggestion. At first, only those close to the Embered Peaks are affected, but as Boregal begins to panic, his call spreads outward and begins to capture a larger range of creatures in its pull.

SYNOPSIS

While traveling along the Wandering Walk, the PCs encounter a strange sight: two young people riding toward them on a *scutimorph*. The duo asks the PCs for assistance, forcing them to make a decision. One choice leads to the False Forest, the other to the Cylon Basin.

Whatever path they choose, the PCs discover that something is disturbing the creatures of the area, but they struggle to find the source. Although many people might remark on the changes they've noticed, no one seems to have solid information about what could be causing the problems.

As the PCs follow a string of clues, they uncover

information that leads to Embered Peaks, a small town to the south. Eventually they learn the town's secret—a man-turned-machine buried deep beneath the earth that has the power to briefly revive the dead.

The PCs must decide whether to free the machine or destroy it, ultimately facing the consequences of their choice.

THE WANDERING WALK

The Wandering Walk is a pilgrimage route through the Ninth World. No one knows the exact length of the Wander, nor can anyone point to its exact beginning or end. Many people speculate that the Wander is actually a closed circle that encloses the whole of the Ninth World and that some travelers, especially those with enhancements or otherworldly attributes, have been trekking its eternal loop since before recorded time.

For most, the Wander is too physically taxing to be used as a trade or travel route. It slips through fluid-filled canyons, curves inside crawlspace tunnels, and winds through woods, forests, and much of *the Beyond*. The rewards seem few, and the dangers are many. Yet at any given time of the year and at any given point along the known sections of the route, the Wander is laced with pilgrims, explorers, and those who are foolish enough to think it offers safe passage. Those who follow the Wander for religious, spiritual, or other reasons are called *Peregrines* or just *Birds* (though the latter term is usually derogatory). Although their dress varies, true *Peregrines* carry some mark of the Wander. Typically, the mark is an elaborate and continually growing circular bloodscar along their palm; there is little else to do along the Wander when one is not wandering, and the intricate nature of the scar gives bragging rights to show how long a traveler has survived along the way. Experienced *Peregrines* carry the scar up the length of their arm or on both palms.

Of course, there are also many who trek the Wander for other kinds of growth—namely, the growth of their pockets. These skulkers who come to borrow from the bodies of the fallen often become inadvertent pilgrims themselves, either getting lost along the route or walking it to find a home where they can settle with their newfound spoils. They don't generally make it far before they fall to the elements or to the hand of another skulker.

And thus, the Wander captures all in its eternal length.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

You can use this adventure as the scenario that starts a new campaign. If the PCs begin as strangers, give the players the background about the Wandering Walk ahead of time. They'll have to integrate their characters into the adventure by deciding why they're on the pilgrimage (or at least on the path). More about this below.



The action begins on what's called the Fifth Stretch of the Wandering Walk, the long, dry, mountainous expanse of the route that stretches roughly between the western point of Cyllion Basin—a town filled with pools that is a rejuvenation point for weary travelers—and the eastern point of the Great Slab, a huge construction that rises from the land in a large, flat square of synth and concrete. Wise Peregrines know to go around the slab, despite the length this detour adds to the route. Those with less knowledge and poorer friends will not be warned in time. To the north lies the False Woods.

The Fifth Stretch is probably the best-documented area of the Wandering Walk, perhaps because it has a number of small villages here and there and because the expanse plays host to an experience that can't be found anywhere else—occasional bioluminescent swarms (if someone knows when or why the swarms occur, they're not telling). The swarms consist of millions of see-through organisms that spend most of their lives lying camouflaged on the sandy landscape until they suddenly rise together, becoming bioluminescent and twisting and turning in unified patterns of dance and flight. In fact, the sandy landscape is not sand at all but is built from layers of blue-green detritus from the creatures. This loam quickly soils the skin and stains the clothes of those who spend much time here, and

it's sometimes used as dye or food coloring.

Before beginning the adventure, each PC should establish his or her reason for being in the area (although if they are strangers, they might not have shared this information with one another).

Options include the following:

- They're attempting a pilgrimage of their own after a tragic event in their life.
- They hope to catch a glimpse of a light swarm for personal or scientific reasons.
- They're skulkers, hoping to gather spoils from the dead Peregrines along the way.
- They're lost or on their way to somewhere else.
- They have heard rumors of treasure in the False Woods.
- They have heard rumors of a "resurrection machine" somewhere nearby.
- They hope to be the first to climb the Great Slab.
- They're collecting loam to dye something they are creating or building.
- They have some other, more personal reason.

WANDERING WALK ENCOUNTERS

During this adventure, the PCs spend much of their time traveling. There is little of note along the path, but the characters can use the time to deepen their relationships with one another. The group will need to camp for at least one night.



GMs can add side encounters to the journey, if desired. These encounters can be introduced anywhere and at any time while the PCs are located in the Fifth Stretch of the Wandering Walk.

The Skulking Bands

This side encounter can be used anytime the PCs are near the Wander. It should take place at night but doesn't need to occur in the location of a Mouth Cairn, where the zaelem have been spending their time of late.

The "skulking bands" are known mostly by whispers and rumors. Believed to be groups of humans or abhumans that rove the edges of the Fifth Stretch (and perhaps a few other portions) of the Wandering Walk, the skulking bands are actually creatures called zaelem.

From far away, a zaelem appears to be a group of bandits that quickly moves as one across the land. In truth, it is a single creature. Its sluglike main body is wide and flat, with its mouth on the underside, and crusty extrusions on its back grow 5 to 6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) in height—the "bandits." The creature's lower half can be as large as 10 square feet (0.9 sq. m) and takes on the color of the ground below it. A zaelem lowers itself over a prone creature and attempts to suffocate its prey before sucking the entirety—body, clothing, and possessions—into its mouth.

The protrusions that rise from the creature's back are built from the collected possessions of the dead, which it cannot digest. The protrusions grow larger with every subsequent kill. This also makes a zaelem dangerous in unpredictable ways. Depending on what odd assortment of objects it has integrated, when attacked, it could exude a poison, explode, or spew a cone of flames if a numenera weapon is amid the remains. The zaelem don't know how to control the numenera, but they can be hazardous just the same.

If a PC is sitting or standing, the skulking bands attempt to knock them flat with a successful attack that inflicts no damage. If the zaelem succeeds, or if the character is already prone (perhaps asleep), it then tries to lower its large, flat body over the victim and suffocate him. Suffocation takes four rounds, and during each round the victim can attempt a Might defense roll to get free.

Zaelem attacks are the origin of the popular (and often misinterpreted) saying, "On the Wander, a man would do well to sleep with his best of friends."

Loot: If the PCs succeed in killing a zaelem and take a closer look, they're likely to find useable parts, explorer's gear, and perhaps even 1d6 cyphers among the protrusions.

Light Swarms

It has been a long time since the people of the Wander have seen a light swarm, yet many wait for it with

longing. The stories that have been passed down for generations describe it as a beautiful sight, something beyond words and wonder. However, it's highly probable that no one alive today has ever seen one.

If the PCs encounter a light swarm, it happens faster than seems possible. One moment, the night sky is dark. The next, the entire sky is filled with blue-green orbs that seem to move in an intricately choreographed dance. The creatures are cool to the touch and do no harm to the PCs if they brush against the characters' skin. The event seems to go on for hours, perhaps, until even the most interested people find their attention overwhelmed by the length of the dance.

This is no mere dance, however; it is the creatures' transitory phase from larva to adult. They are connecting in long chains, spinning their way into giant triple helixes that, once complete, lose their luminescence and fall to the ground. The newly formed larval creatures are starving after their long transition, and the characters probably look like tasty snacks.

If the PCs are nearby when this occurs, they might be attacked by twelve larval creatures.

Taking the Girl

This encounter works only if the PCs have chosen to take Seria with them on their travels.

As the PCs bed down for the evening, they discover that four of the Peregrines from earlier in the day have followed them. Instead of the friendly conversation the PCs expect, the group asks them to hand over the girl, clearly meaning to do her harm.

With the right questions or intimidation tactics, the PCs might discover that the reason has to do with Seria's ability to control the scutumorphs. The PCs can hand her over, scare the Peregrines into leaving without her, or fight them off.

ENCOUNTER 1:

THE MOUTH CAIRNS CAMP

The PCs have gathered at one of the Mouth Cairns tucked in the shadow of a hulking metallic structure along the Wander. These shallow, circular hollows—each marked by a short, round wall built from the jaws of dead Peregrines—are considered among the few safe places along this stretch of the route. Those who enter a bone circle must give some promise of their good intent to the slain lest the dead mouths awake and cast their retribution. Even those who don't believe in the so-called Slaytongue may find themselves at the end of a weapon if they try to break the peace here.

Still, PCs have likely heard the rumor that something's attacking even those sequestered in the cairns. Travel through the area is more dangerous than usual. Others camping in and around the Mouth Cairns have heard similar stories.

Zaelem, level 3, health 18, Armor 2, stealth actions as level 4

Slaytongue is believed in some parts of the world to be the powerful and angry voice of the dead. Desecrate the memories or bodies of the deceased, and the Slaytongue will come for you. Many adults will say they don't believe in the ancient curse, yet they reverently honor the Mouth Cairns.

Light swarm, level 2



Once all the players are comfortable with where they are and what's going on, read or paraphrase the following.

READ ALOUD

The camp is mostly peaceful, with about a dozen travelers sharing the sleeping and cooking space. There is no light swarm, but there are stars and glowglobes and a little drink, and the weather in the lee of the structure is dry and passable. In the early evening, you hear some disgruntled talk about the lack of a light swarm and a few whispered tales of the Iron Wind coming into the area. But it's only when the conversation turns toward a recent rash of deaths in the Mouth Cairns that the group grows restless.

Rumors, insists one old man, both palms and the exposed length of his arms covered in elaborate bloodscar.

My mother saw it with her own eyes, says another, younger man, who points at a woman sleeping along the edge of the hollow and then makes the circle of augmentation with his fingers. *She has mech eyes, and trust me, she sees everything*. There is nervous laughter from the group. Most everyone has a mother, after all, and remembers her impossible eyesight, augmented or not.

Likely not human at all, says a third traveler, and a fourth and fifth agree.

The PCs can interject their own beliefs about what's been happening at the Cairns. Characters who have been on the Wander for a while are likely to know more details, but the PCs can use this opportunity to share their own interpretations or to agree or disagree with other characters or NPCs. Feel free to add details about the NPCs and have them participate in the discussion, but keep in mind that they don't get involved in the action or the rest of the adventure. (That's why they haven't been given names here.)

This is a chance for PCs to strengthen connections with other members of their party, so encourage them by taking the roles of various NPCs and joining in the conversation. (The truth is that the zaelem have been attacking people in the Mouth Cairns, but the question is: why?)

READ ALOUD

Late into the night, talk of odd wounds and dead bodies leaves everyone chilled despite the soft air, and the discussion finds many of the circle awake long after their usual hours.

Still, in the end, everyone sleeps, as they must, and there are not a few who find themselves surprised to wake in the morning whole and unharmed. There

BEALE

A beale is a rare genetic ability to offer mental suggestions to creatures, and people who have this ability are often called by the term as well. Beales are connected to one another by tenuous mental links that seem to intensify as they get closer to others of their kind. (Imagine a solar system where the gravitational power of a star pulls the planets closer to one another and to itself.)

The word "beale" is a bastardization of "beal," a Scottish term for the mouth of a river or valley (originally from the Gaelic "beul," meaning mouth). Presumably, the word was originally used tongue-in-cheek, a way to describe those with the ability to communicate without using their mouth. It is the closest approximation we have today for the term which commands both respect and fear and is used as a curse in some parts of the Ninth World.

The GM can decide how quickly the PCs learn of the word and Seria and Boregal's genetic makeup. At various points in the story, the GM should drop various clues about Seria's unusual mindtouch ability, and the word "beale" might be whispered by those who fear or revere the power.

The circle of augmentation—a gesture in which a person makes two fists atop each other and twists them in opposite directions—is used to designate physical augmentations. Occasionally used as a derogatory gesture.

is something delicious about opening your eyes to a lifting light and realizing that it's neither the glow of the afterlife nor the shine from the falling blade of a knife. The realization gives the morning's activity a boisterous and comradely feel.

As you're breaking camp, there is the sound of hooves in the distance. From far away, it perhaps sounds of an army, a huge number of creatures making their way toward the hollow, although there is no sight of such a thing, not even from the augmented eyes of the mother. Eventually, however, she makes out that it is actually just one creature, a scutimorph, coming across the sands from the direction of the False Woods at a superb pace, carrying at least two riders. There is a low murmur from the group at this news—herds of scutimorphs fill the False Woods at the northern edge of the Fifth Stretch, wrapping their segmented bodies around the heat-conducting trunks. No one *rides* the creatures.

You sure what you're seeing, mother? asks the young man, only to be shushed by the others who strain their eyes northward.

The creature and its riders arrive quickly, its many flat feet barely disturbing the earth as it settles to a stop between the structure and the hollow.

One of the riders is a young man, clearly injured from a fight of some kind. His wounds are serious but probably not life-threatening. The other rider,



Patel, level 2
Seria, level 2,
intermittent mind-
influencing and
communication powers
at short range as the GM
sees fit

Pallone, page 251

barely older than a girl, is clearly distraught. Neither of them bears the marks of the Peregrines, nor are their pants stained with the telltale blue-green hem of the area. Observant PCs may notice that the girl, even in her anguish, seems to be the one who is somehow taming the scutimorph. The scutimorph doesn't allow anyone else close to it. By talking with the young man, who says his name is **Patel**, the PCs can easily learn that the girl is his sister, **Seria**; that they and their family were attacked by creatures called **pallones**; and that they are riding for help. Patel begs the PCs to take his sister to the Cylion Basin, saying that she needs some type of protection (although from what, he will not say), while he returns to help defend his family from the attackers.

If the PCs try to get more information from him, a successful Intellect-based roll means that he warms up to one particular member of the group. Patel might tell this person that Seria controls the scutimorph through her powers as a beale and that the protection she needs is for her mind, which is being affected by the strangeness that seems to be gripping the whole region. However, because he is very protective of Seria and reluctant to reveal her secrets, the difficulty to gain this information is increased by three steps, to a total of 5. No matter what the results of the roll, Patel will not share this information with the entire group, only in a private discussion with the single PC he speaks with.

Seria is clearly distraught, barely able to form complete sentences. The only time she speaks is to disagree with her brother. She asks the PCs to leave her and travel back with Patel to help her family in the False Woods. She insists that she can get to the Cylion Basin on her own. If the PCs make additional attempts to communicate with her, she continues to repeat her request.

GM Intrusion: If any of the PCs touch Seria at any point, they hear her utter something guttural and lyrical. However, the sound is only in their minds. It gives them an odd connection to her, and throughout the adventure, they will sometimes hear her nonsense words in their head. This form of geas does not urge the affected PCs to any particular action, but it gives them a sense of disquiet when they move close to places that are important to the girl.

The Scutimorph: Once Seria is no longer in physical contact with the scutimorph, the creature breaks its connection with her. If anyone attempts to touch it or even approach within 5 feet (1.5 m) of it, the scutimorph likely attacks. Otherwise, it skitters off.

PC Choice: At this point, the PCs must choose a path—help Seria by going to the Cylion Basin

(Encounter 4), or help her family by going to the False Woods (Encounter 2). To get involved in the action, they'll have to choose one of the two options, though it doesn't matter which one. If the PCs split up, they'll likely meet up again soon. (If the characters go separate ways, you'll have to run multiple encounters at once, with each group of PCs dealing with only half of the situation. It's not that hard to do—it's like cutting back and forth between two scenes in a movie.)

Either way, the PCs will soon discover that something strange is afoot on a much larger scale than the lives of two young people. Something is creating odd disturbances among the creatures of the area. Although many people who live in the region have noticed the disruptions and might remark upon them to the PCs, few seem to have any understanding of the cause.

ENCOUNTER 2: THE FALSE WOODS

From far away, the False Woods appears to be an actual forest, probably one that was cultivated. All of the large trees appear to be the same diameter and the same height. Only when the PCs get closer do they discover that the name "False Woods" is more than apt. This was once a sort of structure, but now it appears more like a grove of trees. However, the trees are not trees at all, but a field of synth tubes covered in a living mesh at the top.

Each brown-grey tube begins about 2 feet (0.6 m) above the ground and rises 20 (6.1 m) feet into the air. The tubes are about 10 feet (3 m) in diameter and hollow on the inside. A large scutimorph wraps around each tube, and the creature's rough and cobbled brown exoskeleton makes the tube look like a real tree trunk. PCs attempting to climb the tubes on the outside find that the creatures release a vaporous substance that makes their exoskeletons slippery. Trying to kill or harm a scutimorph causes the creature to rear up from its coil around the tube, its large front pinchers seeking to damage the attacker. If one scutimorph wakes, the others begin to respond as well.

The interiors of some of the tubes have small cutouts, forming ladders of sorts. The mesh above the tubes, once some kind of protective roof, now hangs down in long strips and is littered with debris, both natural and artificial. Despite its age, the weaving is strong and, in most places, still supports the weight of a human walking across it.

Under the Geas: If any of the PCs are under the geas of Seria, the closer they get to the False Woods, the stronger their sense of unease becomes. It creates a sickening feeling in the stomach and a bit of a headache. Although this



doesn't impair the affected characters, it provides an opportunity for a GM intrusion. PCs who are in combat or conversation may find their sense of unease growing strong enough that they fumble their weapon, miss their mark, or suffer in their conversational skills.

Attacked in the Woods: While the PCs explore the False Woods, they are attacked by an agitated scutimorph. The creature acts erratically. Fortunately, if they manage to inflict 10 points of damage, it flees.

ENCOUNTER 3: THE RUINED ALDEIA

A few hundred yards into the False Woods, the PCs discover a clearing that appears to hold the remains of a small village: three triangular structures that are made of a living substance similar to the mesh above. These are clearly dwellings, and a quick inspection of the site shows that there once were nearly a dozen more similar structures, which have since been destroyed. A number of people are in the area, rebuilding the structures, cleaning up, and gathering weapons. The general mood seems to be exhaustion and fear. As the PCs arrive, the villagers suddenly take up arms, mostly long spears and staffs of metal and synth.

The characters might think that the villagers are preparing to harm them, but they quickly realize that the people are instead attacking thin, almost invisible creatures in the air above them. These creatures are the pallones that Patel warned them about.

Six pallones of various sizes attack the villagers and the PCs. They are especially aggressive, increasing their level to 3 for this encounter. The villagers are skilled with their weapons and competent in battle, although it's clear that they aren't used to fighting this particular creature.

PCs who assist in the fight are rewarded with gratitude from the villagers and invited to share a meal and conversation.

Talking to the Villagers: Possible NPC interactions include the following.

Naedi, the mother of Seria and Patel. She approaches the PCs as soon as it's clear that they have come to help. If the PCs mention the names of either of her children, she is eager to hear of their fate. Naedi is equally keen to explain that this attack on their town is the second by the pallones in as many days. In her distraught state, she vehemently blames everyone but her daughter.

However, a PC who calms her and makes her feel safe discovers that her true worry is that this is all Seria's fault. She might even admit that Seria is a beale (getting her to reveal that fact is a level 4 task).

Lowd, Seria's grandfather and the town's current leader. He is concerned about his grandchildren but says, a bit gruffly, "That girl is capable of caring for herself and then some." He seems more worried about rebuilding the town and preparing it to defend against further attacks. PCs who assist him with this task for more than an hour find that he offers his own view of the story: something under the ground is disrupting the natural order of the creatures in the area. "I feel its pull from the fingers of the west," he says. This is a reference to the Embered Peaks, but the connection might not be obvious yet. Figuring out the reference at this point is a difficulty 4 Intellect task.

Vibris, a young man. Vibris seems to remain separate from the others. Although he fought bravely against the pallones, he retreats to the edge of the town after the battle, smoking and watching the other villagers. If the PCs approach him, he tries to send them off roughly with a glare or a harsh word. Those skilled in persuasion or charm (and who offer him a bit of food, something to smoke, or the like) hear him say, "Don't believe those fools. This is all that girl's doing. Why don't you ask *her* why this has been happening?"

Other villagers talk generally about how creatures in the area have been unusually aggressive as of late. Even the scutimorphs have uncoiled from their tree-tubes to attack without provocation.

PC Choice: From here, the characters can head west to the Embered Peaks (Encounter 7) or go to the Cylion Basin and try to track down the girl (Encounter 4).

ENCOUNTER 4: TROUBLED WATERS

If the PCs head toward the Cylion Basin, they most likely have Seria with them. Although she seems to have no physical troubles—she is able to keep pace with the group with surprising ease—the girl remains quiet and strained, clearly in some type of mental anguish. PCs who talk to her calmly without asking a lot of questions (for this roll, the difficulty is increased by one step) may discover that she's worried about her family and village, and that she has an odd noise and pain in her head that makes it difficult to think or speak clearly.

If the PCs instead arrive in the Cylion Basin *looking* for Seria and Patel, someone points them in the right direction after they ask around a bit (or purchase a healing remedy). The siblings are with Darvin (see below), who has been unable to heal Seria due to the broken hounds in the synth garden.

Lowd, level 3

Vibris, level 3

Naedi, level 3



Cylion Basin

Situated at the westernmost edge of the Fifth Stretch of the Wandering Walk, the town of Cylion Basin is a place of respite and healing for Peregrines and other travelers.

The region is named for a series of five small bodies of liquid, all roughly the same size—about 20 feet (6.1 m) around and 3 feet (0.9 m) deep—that are arranged in a straight line. Each basin is filled from a natural source with a different color liquid. When travelers arrive in town on the only path, they encounter the basins in this order: red, orange, yellow, green, and black. Each basin is also filled with something else—a primordial soup of nanites, microscopic creatures, and other elements that help to heal minor physical ailments and illnesses.

The town grew up around the bodies of water, using them as a sort of main street. Most of the businesses are related to health and wellness, and the community boasts a wide variety of people who call themselves healers of one sort or another. A number of shops and stalls offer health remedies of various types—healing hands and chants, potions and pills, idols and candles, technical and mechanical objects, and more. It costs nothing to use the basins, but much of the town's revenue stream is based on a busy tourist trade from the sale of other remedies. Thus, the basins are well lit, and people use them at all hours of the day and night.

Arrival: When the PCs arrive at the Cylion Basin, they notice that the town is bustling with a wide assortment of people in different stages of health. The many shops and stalls seem to have fewer salable goods than they might expect. PCs who comment on the lack of goods discover that the stores are having a difficult time getting supplies lately because many of the usual vendors have not come to town.

PCs who ask about getting help for Seria might end up with too much information. Once the villagers understand that it's for the girl, they're overly ready to help, hawking their wares and sharing contradictory suggestions that might leave the characters confused and frustrated.

However, PCs who spend a bit of coin at any of the shops notice a sudden switch in the personality of the vendor.

Typically, the shopkeeper leans forward and shares the information as though it were a well-guarded secret rather than something anyone could learn for a shin or two. "Head back to the end of Main Street, past the black pond, and look for the sign with the brain on it."

READ  ALOUD

"Main Street" is just a set of long wooden planks laid down along both sides of the basins. In the

waters, men and women and creatures play and rest. Children dart around you as you make your way down the rainbow stretch of ponds.

Of all the unnatural colors—the red of blood, the orange of sunset, the green of the brightest leaf against the light—it is perhaps the black that fills you with a sense of unease. If the liquid were tarry or oily, it wouldn't upset your senses so much. But it's watery, thin and yet as deep and black as if it were solid. Children splash and play in its darkness, spreading long streams of impossibly dark ink toward one another until it runs down their hair and skin in veins of black.

Look away if you can so you don't forget what you're searching for: a store, a sign. And beyond the black basin, there it is: a wooden sign with an actual brain nailed to it with two large, thick nails. From the size, the brain doesn't appear to be human, but it's hard to be sure.

Beneath the sign is a woman who wears the face of a mercurial healer. Sharpened shards of metal and synth protrude in semicircles around her eyes, the base of her nose, and the corners of her mouth.

"Come," she says, without giving you time to speak or ask or even gape. "I know of what you seek."

The woman's name is **Darvin**, and she specializes in illnesses of the brain. Inside her shop are tubes and wires making machines that seem to be hodge-podged together. She asks for the PCs' story, but as she listens, most of her attention is focused on Seria. Darvin says she has a remedy but needs materials from the synth garden outside of town. The garden, she tells them, used to be a community resource, a place to produce many of the materials the local healers need for their potions and remedies, but recently a pack of broken hounds took over the area, keeping the healers away.

"It's dangerous," she might caution. "But those here would owe you, should you manage to return the synth garden to safety. Leave the girl with me so I can prepare her."

If the PCs agree to go, Darvin asks them to bring back four long strips of a red metal as well as a golden pear, which "might give a bit of a shock to the touch."

ENCOUNTER 5: THE SYNTH GARDEN

The synth garden is just outside town to the east. It looks something like a traditional garden, built with long rows. Some rows are home to flowering plants, herbs, or edibles, while other rows host growing things that seem as synthetic as they are organic. Six **broken hounds** have moved into the area, although no one knows why.

If the PCs succeed in killing the hounds and

Darvin, level 4

Broken hound, page 232



securing the garden, a little scouting will allow them to discover a row of plants that produces leaves made of long red metal, as well as a small bush that has one or two golden “pears” still on it. Any PC who picks one from the bush likely gets a bit of a shock, but it’s only on the first touch.

Those with skills in identifying and using plants or with the numenera might find additional things of use here as well. (The GM can expand on this as desired.)

If the PCs return victorious, Darvin says that she has prepared Seria but needs a day to fashion the cure. At that point, she says, Seria should be able to tell them more about what happened to her and provide clues as to their next move. Once word spreads of the PCs’ assistance in the synth garden, the townspeople welcome them with offers of free lodging, healing potions, and meals during their stay.

ENCOUNTER 6: A NIGHT IN TOWN

During the night, the PCs hear screams and thrashings. If they investigate, they discover three people who have just climbed out of the black basin. All three are covered in streams of small black bugs that flow like water down their skin. The bugs are easily shaken off and stepped on or smashed, but the victims have small purple bruises all over their exposed skin. The bruises aren’t painful, but they itch madly.

If a PC happens to be in the black basin during this time, she also experiences these bugs.

The town seems upset by this incident but not surprised. The general consensus is that this type of thing—the broken hounds moving in, harmful creatures in the basins—seems to be happening more and more.

In the morning, Seria is sporting an odd new faceplate: two red and gold strips across her left cheek. In many ways, she seems like an entirely different person, now chattering and laughing, teasing the PCs, thanking them for their help, and making preparations to return to her family.

If the PCs ask her, she tells them that she felt a mind connected with hers from the northwest, a machine-man deep in the earth. She draws a map for them in the dirt, clearly denoting the seven-fingered mountain peak as the place she is referring to. It takes little effort to realize that this is the Embered Peaks.

“He’s scared,” she says. “But I don’t like him. He made me feel bad, and I don’t want you to help him. But you have to. I think you have to.”

No matter what the PCs say, Seria makes it clear that she is going back to her family to make sure they are safe and well.

Any PCs who were formerly connected with her now feel that sense of unease lifted, and they’re surprised to discover how much better they suddenly feel.

ENCOUNTER 7: EMBERED PEAKS

If the PCs travel to Embered Peaks, they find what should be a simple town. The majority of the buildings in the center of town are made of stone and steel, with a dark green cement mixture between the blocks. On the outskirts, homes are mostly carved out of the mountain edges, often revealing the dark green interior of the landscape.

However, Embered Peaks seems to be in some kind of upheaval, nearly pushed to the brink of insanity. Signs of destruction and violence—broken windows, recent fires, people with bandages—are everywhere. The merchants, cavot farmers, and pilgrims are too scared to talk to the PCs or to one another. They look at the PCs (and at many of their fellow residents) with obvious mistrust. Groups of people gather in small clumps, whispering among themselves and preparing for the next outbreak of violence.

If the PCs ask about the violence, they get a bizarre mixture of answers, all expressions of Boregal’s paranoia and insanity:

- “I don’t like the way everyone in this town chants in the middle of the night, praying to some dark god. I think I have to kill them.”
- “Everyone here hates me because I’m the only one that knows the truth about the universe.”
- “Lotsa folks ‘round here got some kinda strange machine in their brains. You can see it when they talk.”
- “I was just minding my own business when everyone started attacking everyone else. It was like living in a madhouse.”
- “You must be one of the crazy ones if you’re asking me that.”

With some persuasion or intimidation (a level 4 task), the PCs might get someone to tell them to search out Magistrate Yieran, who can be found in the Forum of the Dead—the circular stone building in the middle of town. Yieran is the leader of the devoirs and, thus, of Embered Peaks itself, although no one has seen him for days.

If the PCs inquire about a resurrection machine or any kind of machine, not only do they get no answer, but the person either attacks them on the spot (a typical resident is level 2) or waits to gather a few friends and attacks the PCs later.

Looking for Yieran: Inside the Forum of the Dead, the PCs enter an outer office that seems to have been ransacked. Papers and machinery are strewn about. An observant character might notice a few splatters of blood on the floor and furniture (a level 5 task).

A rather frantic young man seems to be looking for something in the outer office, his blond hair falling over his face as he stops his search to greet the characters. This is **Chahil**. If the PCs ask about

PCs who spend any time in the basins add 1 to any recovery rolls they make while in town.

Cavots are small, black rodentlike creatures. As vegetarians, they subsist on a diet of echar berries, found on shrubs that grow best in dark, wet places. Unable to digest the seeds of the berries, the cavots discard them after having polished them to a beautiful yellow shine. Many of the villagers raise cavots and use the seeds not only as currency but also as signs of wealth, decorating their clothing and personal belongings with them.

Chahil, level 3



All of the “Read Aloud” text is information that the PCs probably need to know. You can, of course, paraphrase this information in your own words.

Magistrate Yieran, level 4

Magistrate Yieran, he says the magistrate is not seeing anyone right now due to the murders.

If the PCs are diplomatic, they can get him to answer some inquiries, but nothing seems to make sense. Chahil talks about the *devoirs* both as if they will be back at any moment and as if they're all dead. It's difficult to get any real information out of him. Chahil insists that the PCs come back later. However, if they are persistent and persuasive (tasks to convince him are level 6 due to his agitated state), Chahil takes the PCs into the inner office to see Yieran. If the PCs get nowhere with Chahil, they might need to devise a plan to sneak in on their own.

Sneaking In: The door to the magistrate's inner office (in the very center of the building) has two locks and requires two rolls. The first lock is level 2, and the second—an ornate metallic box filled with moving pieces like a sliding puzzle—is level 4.

The inner office holds nothing out of the ordinary, just a desk and a few trunks. Observant PCs notice that the room seems particularly cold in its very center—an area about 5 feet (1.5 m) square where the temperature drops dramatically. If they jump or step in that space, the floor echoes as if it were hollow. Any PCs who get down on the floor to look find a circular door with a button next to it. Once the button is pressed, the door opens very quickly; PCs standing above it must make a Speed defense roll (level 2) to avoid falling through the hole.

If they fall, they drop into near blackness 30 feet (9.1 m) down a circular set of stone stairs. They suffer 3 points of damage.

If they don't fall, the stairs are not dangerous at all, as long as the PCs don't misstep while descending.

ENCOUNTER 8: DEEP SLEEP

At the bottom of the stairs, a hallway leads to a locked door with a mirrored panel next to it. If the PCs sneaked in on their own, they have to figure out how to get through the whisperlocked door. To open the door, one must touch the panel and say “Vaddershim,” jimmy the level 6 lock, or break down the door (a level 5 task). If Chahil is with the characters, he knows the key and can take them right in.

Beyond the door, the PCs find Yieran and the source of all the problems that the area is experiencing. If Chahil is not with the group, alter that part of the read-aloud text.

READ ALOUD

The stairs are circular and well worn, the air beneath the floor colder than you might expect. An odor of something sharp and rotting—perhaps fruit, or burnt meat, or a dead creature beneath the floorboards—assaults your nose. At the bottom of the stairs, a

series of wall torches leads the way down a tunnel.

At the end, Chahil puts his hand against a mirrored square and says something inaudible, his lips actually brushing the surface of the square. A door opens to reveal a large, unadorned room. This is no basement or subroom but a mortuary—a pre-tomb.

Bodies wrapped in strips of *cavot*-dyed shrouds, the purple fabric dark as bruises, rest prone on benches. The only unwrapped parts are their heads. Faces stare blankly upward, eyes wide, mouths slack. The heads of all the dead are shaven, and scorched into each of their foreheads is a black mark about the size of a man's fist.

At the far end of the room, well lit by flames and glowglobes, a tube comes from the wall, a large sparking plunger resting in a clear vat of bubbling water.

At the room's center, a man leans over one of the corpses, his ear to the dead man's mouth. It looks a bit like he's listening for breath, except for the fact that the dead man's mouth is moving. No, not just moving—speaking.

Magistrate Yieran: The leader of the *devoirs* and the town is a tall, soft-spoken man who has been pushed too far. His clothing is carefully tended, and his emblems of position—a rectangular silver pin at his throat and a circular bit of metal that he always holds in his right hand—are clean and shiny.

He doesn't seem surprised to see the PCs approach, and he acknowledges their presence with a nod.

“Are you here to hinder me or to help me?” he asks.

If the PCs say “help,” he nods and will answer their questions, although he occasionally gives them orders, such as handing him various tools or sweeping up.

If the PCs say anything else, Yieran completely ignores them and goes back to dealing with all the dead around him.

Through conversation, the characters can learn:

- The history of the *devoirs* and the resurrection machine, which lies still farther below, as well as what Yieran knows of Boregal—which, truthfully, is not much.
- That the so-called resurrection machine doesn't actually raise the dead but can bring them back to life long enough to ask them a single question.
- That the dead always answer the question with a lie.

If the PCs ask Yieran what he asked the dead man, he won't tell them, saying only, “I asked the wrong question yet again.” The magistrate seems to know nothing about the strange happenings in the outside world.

Yieran has clearly lost his grip on reality and has



nowhere to turn. He asks the PCs for their help with the machine. "I have killed as many as I dare," he whispers. "And I have learned nothing. But I would rather have the machine not at all than let it destroy the town I love." After Yieran says this, the PCs can learn that the dead all around are the other devoirs. He killed them all so he could question them and learn how to stop the machine from torturing everyone into madness.

From one of the tables, he takes a long-handled tool with a spiked pinwheel at one end. "Cut him loose," he says, "or kill him. For I cannot." He bids the PCs to follow him.

READ ALOUD

Yieran unlocks a large door, a tubular passage that is filled with light. It slants downward. At the end of the passage is a great triangular room. Most of the room is taken up with a large gelatinous mass, like a thousand translucent black bubbles with glowing red interiors, attached to the wall with cords and conductors. Bits of mechanical things and machinery are strewn about and piled up, giving the room the impression of a tech junkyard.

You hear a voice in your heads—a few nonsense words, accompanied by a sense of panic. A clear plea for help. A shriek. Mumbled pleading.

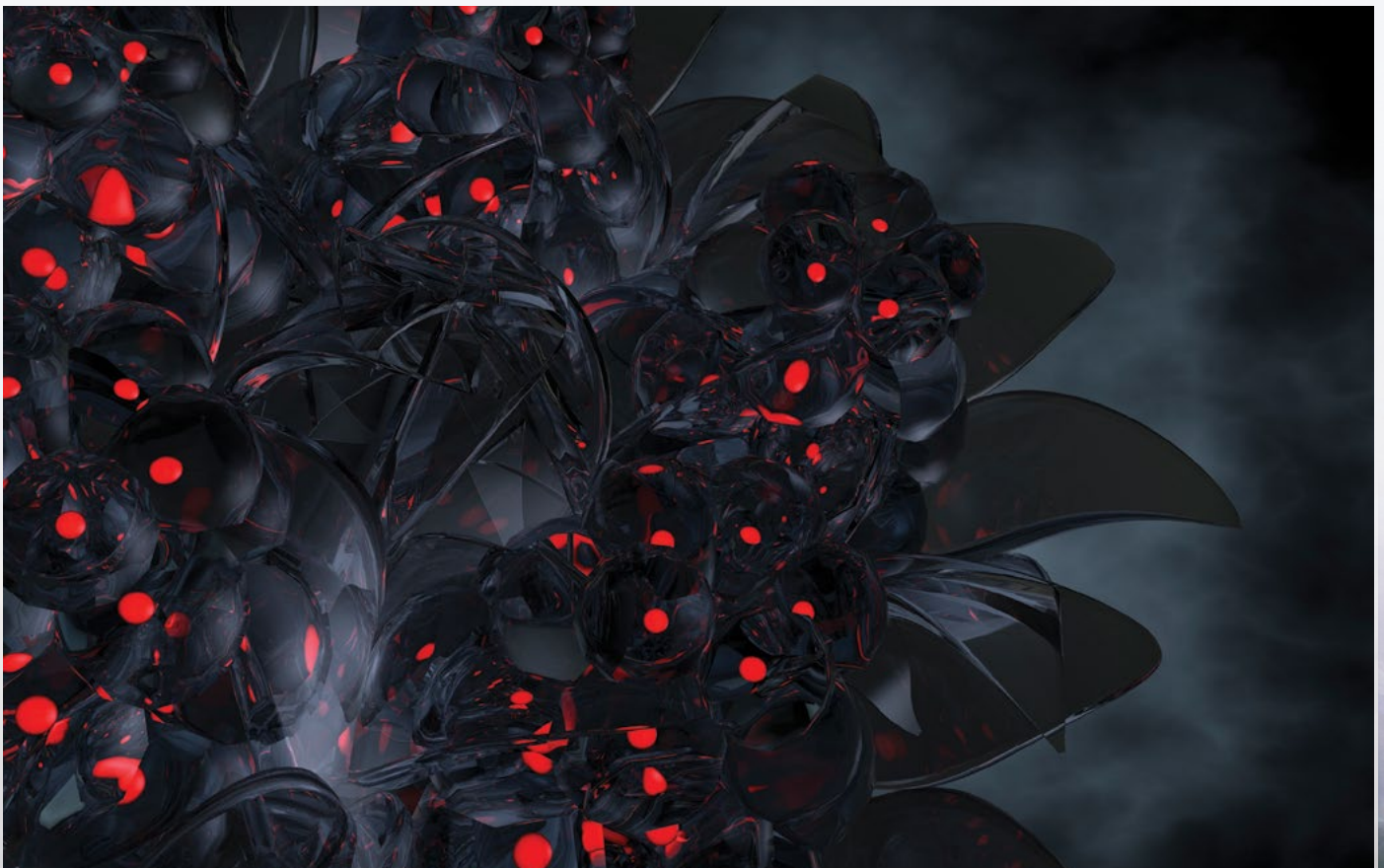
The mass is slightly soft to the touch and very warm, but it doesn't move or respond when touched. Along the back of the mass, near where it joins the wall, runs a seam that seems to fit the tool the magistrate gave to the PCs.

The mass is Boregal. There is no way to communicate with him in this state except with mental powers. If any of the PCs have such abilities, they can try connecting to Boregal's mind. At first, this results in messages of utter panic and stronger pleas for release. If they soothe him and convince him that they can help him escape (a level 5 task), Boregal becomes calm and guides them to a small switch on the bottom of the mass. Flipping the switch essentially causes the bubbles to burst and melt, leaving only the petrified brain. All is quiet from within it—at least for now.

If the PCs attack or damage the mass, attempting to destroy it, Boregal begins using his mind attack powers on everyone in the room.

If the PCs use the tool to cut along the seam, the mass collapses to the floor. Inside it is a petrified object that once might have been a brain. As soon as the brain is released, it begins to draw all loose material in the room toward it to create the shape of a human. Stones, small weapons, tools, bits of the gelatinous mass, and anything the PCs aren't holding onto become part of the body structure.

"When I say that some of my best friends are artificial, most people have no idea what I'm talking about." ~Sir Arthour



Boregal

Level 5 (15)

Description: While his brain is still of this world, the body of Boregal no longer exists. However, the strength of his beale is such that he can do more than touch other minds; he can control inanimate objects to build himself a body again. Once his new body is complete, he fights by attacking with his mind and his physical form.

Motive: Self-defense, the desire to be free

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 3

Armor: 2

Modifications: Attacks those with mental powers as level 6.

Combat: Boregal's primary mind attack is to disorient and confuse a foe, but the attack also deals 6 points of Intellect damage (ignoring Armor) to everyone in long range. If a foe comes close enough to touch Boregal's body, he responds with a defensive physical attack.

As an alternate attack, Boregal can target a single PC and cause the victim to lose her next turn as well as suffer 6 points of Intellect damage.

Interaction: While Boregal is within the machine, telepathy is the only way to communicate with him. If released, he can speak and hear normally. He is confused, terrified, angry, and paranoid. Boregal is clearly half mad with panic, fear, and the amount of time he has spent trapped between life and death. There is no reasoning with him.

Loot: The core of Boregal's petrified brain cannot be destroyed, and it still seems to have a small amount of power—probably a result of the amount of time it has been connected to machinery. This core could be used to restore power to a depleted artifact if a character makes an Intellect roll (use the depleted artifact's level as the difficulty).

GM Intrusion: Boregal takes mental control of a character and forces her to fight her friends for two rounds.

Rescuing Boregal: If the PCs successfully communicate with Boregal and calm him with truth or lies, he remains (or goes back to being) a petrified brain. Afterward, he can speak with them telepathically whether they have mental powers or not. The PCs can take him out of this place and do whatever they feel is right with him. The people and creatures in the region are no longer pushed toward fear and madness, but they must cope with what has happened. They have no idea

what caused the disturbances or why the trouble stopped.

A pacified Boregal could become an NPC companion for the PCs. He will never again take physical form and he refuses to use his powers to harm others, but he could be a telepathic translator or simply a strange friend. He has no knowledge of the current world that is of any use to the PCs.

Fighting Boregal: The fight is likely a dangerous one. Both Chahil and Yieran, already pushed to the brink, are easily controlled by Boregal and fight on his behalf if present.

Destroying Boregal ends his effects on the people and creatures of the region. Further, those who were affected realize that they were being influenced by an outside force, which—while still awful—makes it easier for them to recover and move on.

Dealing With Yieran: If Yieran survives the encounter, the PCs might believe that he needs to be held accountable for his crimes. In truth, the magistrate wasn't simply being mentally influenced. He is genuinely insane and remains so no matter what happens with Boregal.

Loot: Among the objects in the room, PCs discover:

- 1d6 random cyphers
- An oddity: a small synth cone that produces a light breeze when activated
- An oddity: a gemstone set in a metal circle that allows nearby sleepers to have pleasant dreams in which they eat their favorite foods
- An artifact: a synth staff, 5 feet (1.5 m) long, that ends in a foot-long metal bar that gives an electrical shock. It inflicts 3 points of Speed damage and stuns the victim, causing him to lose his next turn. Depletion 1 in 1d10.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Embered Peaks will need time to recover from the emotional and physical damage that occurred, not to mention the loss of all the town's leaders. The townsfolk are grateful that they were saved but also embarrassed and a bit resentful. PCs looking for hearty congratulations won't find much.

Beyond the town, the residents of the surrounding region likely never know what actually happened. But the strange behavior from people and creatures has come to an end, and for that, they are happy.

The PCs might wish to resume their pilgrimage on the Wandering Walk, or they might end it here.

If it all comes down to a fight, it should be an epic one. Take a look at the encounters that you've played through already with the PCs. Were they too hard or too easy? You may want to tinker with Boregal's stats to make them just right for your game. If one PC regularly deals 9 points of damage (which would take Boregal down in just three hits), for example, increasing Boregal's Armor by 1 point will allow him to last at least one more round.

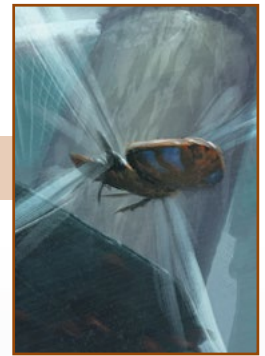
Experience Point Award:

In addition to awarding XP for any artifacts gained, award each PC 1 XP for discovering the truth about Boregal and 1 XP for dealing (one way or another) with the threat he posed to the area. Finally, you might consider awarding each PC 1 XP for helping Seria and Patel and discovering that looks can be deceiving—sometimes great power comes disguised as something that appears frail.



CHAPTER 26

SEEDSHIP



“Seedship” is an adventure for characters who have some experience and background in exploration. In many ways, it’s the perfect example of the “explore an ancient ruin” adventure. Although it’s set in the town of **Druissi** in the **Ba-Adenu Forest**, it could easily be relocated almost anywhere in the Ninth World.

BACKGROUND

Those who built the town of Druissi on the half-buried hulk of an ancient, unknown structure probably chose that place because they knew of the boon it would bring their families. Heat rises constantly from the synth and steel hulk year-round, warming homes, cooking food, and saving lives during the winter.

If those who built the town also knew of the potential dangers their buried structure might someday bring, they turned a blind eye.

But no more. The structure is actually far more ancient and more dangerous than anyone but the most learned might have guessed. Once a mode of transport for mysterious beings of a prior world, the vessel crashed into the earth aeons ago, becoming a buried prison for whatever still lived inside.

After a recent earthquake, more of the wreckage has been revealed, including an area where the metal seems to have rent apart, leaving small openings in the side. The people who live on the surface know only that their once-coveted warmth is now alternately freezing and boiling, that a dark orange liquid sometimes

seeps from the earth into the floors of their homes, and that some residents of Druissi have gone missing.

The town leader is attempting to keep a tight lid on the tragedy, but members of the Hozai—a small religious group forecasting doom—are prophesying that a great evil is awakening in the earth and coming for those who have abused its power.

SYNOPSIS

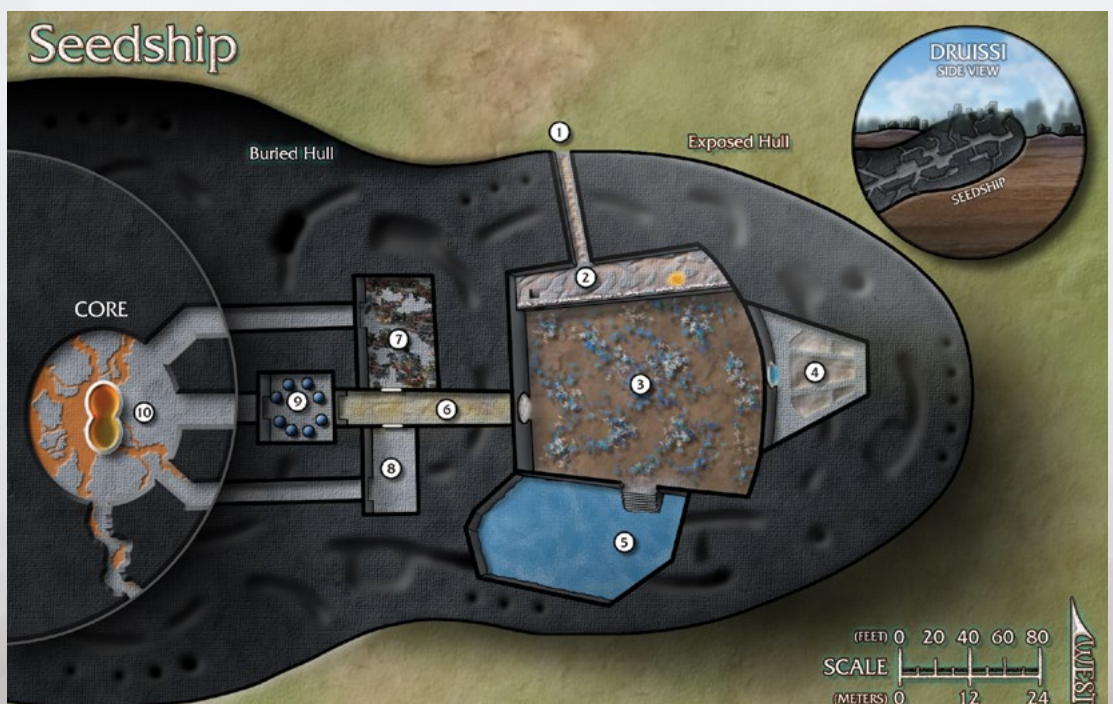
The PCs decide to explore the ancient vehicle, not knowing anything about its nature.

They may discover that a woman bent on solving the problem of the toxic seepage found a way to deal with it but came to an untimely end. They might be able to finish her work. The characters may also discover that the structure is a vessel of some kind, perhaps from another dimension, and that it holds seeds that contain dangerous consciousnesses that want new bodies in this world.

The PCs may also discover that the Hozai are not entirely what they seem.

Druissi, page 191

Ba-Adenu Forest, page 189



GETTING THE PCS INVOLVED

The player characters might hear of Druissi and the strange structure beneath it via tales told elsewhere, or perhaps they arrive in town while traveling. Thanks to its warm baths and heated rooms, Druissi is a coveted rest stop for travelers, and many on the road recommend it as a good place to stay.

Use one of the following hooks to get the PCs interested in exploring the vessel:


Reward: The mayor is offering a reward for anyone willing to quickly and quietly enter the structure, kill everything they find, and seal the hole. He also slyly hints that he'd be willing to reward anyone who shuts up the loudest of the Hozai, a man named Nerr, whose loud, aggressive doomsaying scares the townspeople.

Rescue: A man named Geirn says his wife has disappeared. He doesn't have anything in the way of reward to offer, but he begs the PCs to look for her. Although he keeps saying that she was taken by something from the wreckage, he occasionally misspeaks and hints that she might have gone into the structure of her own accord.

Recovery: Although most of the Hozai loudly proclaim the coming of great evil, in reality they just want to keep people out of the structure so they can explore it themselves. However, one member of the Hozai, a man named Theybis, approaches the PCs for help. He's afraid to enter the structure, but he'd like samples of its materials and creatures for his own use before the other members of the religious group get hold of any of it. Theybis promises the PCs that he will create a useful numenera device for them from parts of the wreckage if they bring him the samples he seeks.

AREA 1: OUTER HULL

If the PCs examine the outer part of the structure, they gain a bit of information. Remember that no one in Druissi knows anything of its nature beyond the obvious. They don't even know that it's a vehicle.

READ  ALOUD

The visible section of the ancient structure is curved and appears to be made of various metals and synth, joined with knobs, smooth seams, and elements that resemble hinges. Most of it feels smooth, and some parts appear more malleable (yet too strong to break or tear easily). Other sections—most of which are circles about 6 inches (15 cm) wide—seem to be made of tightly woven mesh. The material vibrates with a slight, constant shudder and is warm to the touch.

The visible section of the structure is about 500 feet (152 m) long and at least 200 feet (61 m) wide,

some of it covered by the buildings of Druissi. This aboveground section seems to be just a portion of the entire size, giving the impression that the buried sections must be enormous.

The hull is impossible to breach. Any efforts made by the PCs barely leave a scratch.

The recent earth movements appear to have opened the vessel in a number of places. Most of these openings are small—a few inches to less than a foot in width—but one seems almost large enough for the PCs to fit through. Widening the hole through the use of force is a **Might** task with a difficulty of 4. However, it looks like someone or something else already attempted to widen the hole and possibly succeeded before returning the material to its original position.

AREA 2: ENTRY CORRIDOR AND MEZZANINE

Entering through the hole begins the PCs' exploration.

READ  ALOUD

The smell that rises from the widened hole is one of chemicals and rot, an underlying odor that is there and then gone. The hole appears to lead into a shaft or corridor about 6 feet (1.8 m) wide. The walls and ceiling are made of overlaid strips of synth, and the floor consists of a translucent material that bows lightly as you step on it. The area below the floor is a shadowy expanse, broken occasionally by blinks and streams of glowing colors.

PCs who continue down the tunnel move in darkness, unsure whether they're heading toward anything at all. Occasional sections of the floor sink deeply when stepped on or are torn open; the broken sections are easy to see if the PCs have a light source.

About 100 feet (30 m) along, the tunnel stops abruptly and opens into a larger room that seems to be a mezzanine. Built of the same material as the tunnel, this room has a low ceiling with large squares of fabric hanging down from it. At the farthest end of the room, the wall is made of crisscrossed strips of metal that form squares about 6 inches by 6 inches (15 cm by 15 cm). On the other side of this wide grating or grid, the vessel opens farther in all directions; it's impossible to see anything but blackness and occasional moving lights.

The Grid: PCs who touch the grid barehanded get a bit of a shock—nothing harmful, but enough to be very unpleasant. (If a character touches it for a full round, it causes 1 point of damage that ignores Armor.)

Might, page 20

The ship is, of course, much larger than the few areas described here. Feel free to add doors and corridors that lead off into other parts of the ship. These parts can be created by you ahead of time, or you can have the doors or access points you add be blocked or locked, providing an opportunity for later exploration.



Attempting to slash or cut the grid with anything metallic increases the shock, causing 1 point of damage that ignores Armor. Cutting through the level 4 grid is possible with standard tools or weapons, but doing so will cause many shocks—thirty in all. Thus, one character who cuts through the grid alone suffers 30 points of damage, but three characters who work together to cut through each suffer 10 points.

The other walls, ceiling, and floor are impenetrable.

After searching the entire mezzanine, the PCs discover a large gelatinous circle that seems built into the floor near the metal grid. Passing a hand over the circle causes it to light up in a swirling orange spiral. While someone holds his hand over the circle, the grid no longer produces a shock.

Beyond the grid, the drop down to the floor of the chamber beyond is about 20 feet (6.1 m). This is the vessel's main room (area 3).

Hidden Hatch: In the southern portion of the mezzanine, a secret panel on the floor hides a passage that angles down to the main room like a chute. Finding it is a level 6 perception task, although a bright light source decreases the difficulty by one step.

Steel Spiders: If the PCs explore the fabrics hanging from the ceiling, they are attacked. Otherwise, the attack can occur anytime while they explore the room.

READ  ALOUD

From overhead comes the quiet sound of metal moving against metal. There is a soft rustling from the hanging fabric, and the cloth begins to shudder lightly, as though moved by an unseen breeze. Slowly, a long black leg curls over the edge of one of the fabrics. Then another, and another. Soon, you see the bodies that follow—metallic and shiny black, scuttling along on eight legs, and spinning thin, metallic webs that shimmer in the darkness.

The creatures are steel spiders. As the PCs move through the room, four spiders drop down from their homes inside the fabrics, quickly spinning long, metallic webs that are razor sharp and inflict 4 points of damage if touched. The creatures moved to this area after the earthquake to await the appearance of new prey.

AREA 3: THE MAIN ROOM

READ  ALOUD

This chamber is large—hundreds of feet wide and possibly half again that much in length. The lighting is very dim, although you have a sense that things are moving about in the shadows among the plants

that fill the room. From floor to ceiling, this place appears to be about 50 feet (15 m) high, and higher toward the center.

PCs who climb or jump down from the mezzanine discover that the ground of the main floor is marshy and damp. The floor appears to be a combination of muck, mud, and plant matter. Characters who stand still for longer than a moment might feel something slither over their feet or along their legs. The smell is one of stagnant water and rot.

The lights that the PCs saw from above are now more visible, and it's clear that many of them are moving.

PCs with a light source see that the room is like a jungle, filled with tall, white and blue plants with broad leaves and even some thin, thorny trees. They likely have to hack through the foliage to make their way around the room. These plants are unlike anything encountered outside the structure, and they clearly don't require sunlight.

The room teems with strange insects flying and scuttling about. They're annoying, but they're not dangerous (and, like the plants, they're entirely unfamiliar).

A number of mostly innocuous biomechanical creatures—the sources of the moving lights—scurry through the muck, seemingly unaffected by the presence of the PCs. They are far more machine than living being, and their appearance resembles nothing the PCs have ever seen. They avoid other creatures by scurrying up into the trees. Characters with knowledge of the numenera may see the value in attempting to catch (a level 5 **Speed** task) and dismantle these creatures. The inner components of one in every three can be fashioned into a random cypher by any PC who makes an **Intellect** roll with a difficulty of 4.

Returning Here Later: When the PCs go to another area and then come back to this room, they find that four members of the **Hozai** have entered the vessel. The two groups probably startle each other. The Hozai react to the PCs with a great deal of hostility—no one is supposed to be inside the structure. If the PCs were sent by Theybis and they say so, this might alleviate some of the hostility (but only because the Hozai redirect their anger toward Theybis for sending outsiders into the forbidden structure).

The Hozai know that the mysterious structure is actually a vessel, and they suspect that it originated in another dimension. They have no proof, but they eagerly seek confirmation of their theory.

The Hozai explorers are interested in the creatures and plants in this chamber. They have abandoned their ceremonial robes and symbols and instead wear

Steel spider, page 260

Speed, page 20

Intellect, page 20

Hozai Explorers, level 4, 1 Armor



goggles, helmets, leather suits, gloves, and boots, and they carry all manner of gear: ropes, grapnels, large sacks, specimen jars, small cages, tools, and so forth. Of course, they aren't foolish—they are also well armed with dart throwers, broadswords, and spears, and one member carries a cypher: a heat ray emitter that inflicts 9 points of damage.

AREA 4: FRONT HULL

Toward the front of the vessel is a large round door that glows softly and, at first glance, appears to be covered with flowing water. Touching the door reveals that it's made of an unknown material that appears to be dry and yet flowing. Despite its weird appearance, the door is easy to slide open.

READ  ALOUD

This triangular room is lit by gooey globs that are attached to the walls, the many instrument panels (some intact, others destroyed), and almost every other surface. The globs glow in a variety of colors and seem to move slowly over the surfaces in unknown patterns. Most of the walls are constructed of the same translucent material that you've seen before. Through them, you can see the rock and debris surrounding the buried structure. On the other side of the walls, large tunnels have been dug through the dirt.


Discovering 1d6 random cyphers among the panel debris is a level 4 Intellect task. However, anyone who makes an Intellect roll with a difficulty of 6 finds 1d6 more cyphers as well as a random oddity.

PCs can take the globs with them as temporary lights, although a single glob isn't very bright (and fades if removed from the vessel). It will stick to clothing, provided a PC can stand to feel the heat of a glob as it slowly crawls across her body.

If the characters spend more than ten minutes exploring this room, they discover a torn bit of skrip that appears fairly fresh, filled with handwritten notes and an image of a numenera device. The only legible writing says, "Heat heals fissures."

AREA 5: SUNKEN STAIR

Along the far edge of the main room, a set of stairs leads down, although each "step" is nearly 3 feet (0.9 m) high. Liquid runs down the steps, making them slippery but manageable. At the end of seven steps, the stairs disappear into a room filled with liquid.

READ  ALOUD

At the bottom of the stairs, you hear the sound of a woman's voice, a soft cry in an unfamiliar language. The only understandable word is a name—Geirn. The voice seems to come from the watery blackness

in front of you and echoes around the room. A moment later, other voices join in. Some sound human and in anguish, others animalistic and in fear.

The Stairs: Moving up and down these tall, wet steps is difficult. Characters must move very slowly or attempt a level 3 movement task to ascend or descend without slipping and falling. PCs who fall take 1 point of damage and are prone.

The Room: The water in the room is at least 6 feet (1.8 m) deep in most places, and the sides of the room are slippery.

If PCs with light come down into the room, at first it appears that the water is filled with a number of creatures and people, with only their heads above the surface. However, what the PCs are seeing is actually a **mesomeme**, and it rises out of the water to attack soon after it hears them enter the area.

If it can, the mesomeme attempts to grab a character and hold him underwater. The PC must attempt a Might defense roll each round to escape. If the victim fails the roll eight rounds in a row, he drowns. The mesomeme can hold one creature underwater while still engaged in combat with others.

Under the Water: If the PCs search this large area carefully, scouring the water-covered floor, they find a clear synth disk about 4 inches (10 cm) in diameter. Such a search requires at least an hour. The disk makes opening the doors in area 6 very easy.

AREA 6: FLAME CORRIDOR

At the back of the main room is another large round door. This one appears to be made of ice, but touching it reveals that it's constructed of the same material as the opposite door, just with a different appearance. It slides open easily.

Through the door is a long hall about 20 feet (6.1 m) high and 20 feet (6.1 m) across. Unlike the other areas, the hall is well lit, with flickering yellow lights along the ceiling.

READ  ALOUD

The floor is wet, although not as wet as the strange jungle room. Thanks to the overhead lights, you can see that the liquid is dark orange—perhaps the same fluid that the residents of Druissi saw coming up through the ground. Thicker than water, the liquid is warm to the touch and seems to flow from the space ahead toward the main room you just left, behind you. At the end of the corridor, you see a pylon of green translucent stone, which stands about 8 feet (2.4 m) high. It's surrounded by three circular doors.

Mesomeme, page 246



Discerning PCs may realize that the woman they hear as one of the mesomeme's talking heads is that of Geirn's now-dead wife.



The Pylon: If the PCs proceed down the corridor, the pressure of their movement through the air activates a flame that spews forth from a hole in the western wall. The fire inflicts 6 points of damage (ignoring Armor) on any character who fails a Speed defense roll. Those who make the roll still suffer 3 points of damage.

However, if the PCs look, they see a dial on the wall at the north end of the hall. On the dial are a number of symbols. None of them means anything to the PCs, but if they turn the dial to the symbol that looks the most like the pylon, the pylon moves forward, blocking the flame jet. If the dial is turned to any other setting, roll a d20:

- 1–2 The pylon moves away from the flame. There is no way to make it move in front of the jet.
- 3 A panel opens in the eastern wall, and now there are two flame jets.
- 4 A panel opens in the wall, exposing random mechanisms (nothing of importance).
- 5 A shrill siren shrieks for ten minutes. (This likely draws the automaton in area 8 into the hallway.)
- 6–20 Nothing happens.

The Doors: The three circular doors are made of a metallic material of level 7 strength. The door on the right bears deep scratches along its surface, as if another person or creature tried to open it.

Opening these doors is difficult without the synth disk from area 5. If that disk is present, a third of it lights up. The door that it now “points” to opens easily by sliding to one side. Only one door can be opened at a time.

AREA 7: WRECKAGE

The door to this area has been forced open in the past, but that doesn’t make it any easier to open now.

READ ALOUD

This area is a wreck, with debris littering the floor. Part of the structure has collapsed, and metallic support beams have crashed down from the ceiling, exposing mechanical conduits above.

Searching the Chamber: It takes at least an hour to search this room thoroughly. The PCs can find another skrip, as in area 4, but doing so is a difficulty 3 Intellect task. The scrip shows another drawing, this time a sort of map showing a rough sketch of areas 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7. The word “Vessel?” is written on one side of the scrip. On the other side are the words, “But from where?”

The chamber also has 1d6 – 1 cyphers and a cobbled artifact composed in part from the debris;



finding them is a difficulty 4 Intellect task. The artifact matches the image drawn on the skrip in area 4. The device is a **molecular bonder**, which can be used to bond the leaking tank in area 10 back to its original strength.

AREA 8: GUARDIAN

This chamber is mostly empty except for the guardian automaton that stands here, waiting for intruders. It attacks immediately and ruthlessly, fighting until destroyed.

The automaton resembles a barrel-chested giant of a man with four arms. Two of the arms hold metal shields, and two end in long and terrible blades.

Guardian Automaton

Level 5 (15)

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 5

Armor: 4

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 7 due to shields. If struck in a vital spot on its head, the automaton drops both shields.

Combat: A straightforward combatant, the guardian automaton runs into combat and attacks, making two attacks each round as a single action. There is a vital spot on its head that a PC can notice by making an Intellect roll with a difficulty of 5. If a character states that he attacks that spot directly and hits, the automaton drops both shields, reducing its Speed defense to normal. In addition, its two extra arms become useless.

Loot: Salvaging the wreckage of the destroyed automaton yields 1d10 shins, 1d6 cyphers, and an oddity.

Molecular bonder, page 308



In technical terms, touching a seed triggers an almost instantaneous download of information, coded directly onto the DNA of the host. This information is the ultraterrestrial's memories and thought patterns. Further, the process begins rewriting the host's DNA to create a neural override so the consciousness can take control of the body.



Travonis ul, page 263

Experience Point Award:
In addition to awarding XP for gaining any artifacts, award each character 1 XP if the group learns that the structure is a vehicle and 2 XP if they find the source of the strange liquid and stop the leaks.

AREA 9: THE SEEDS

READ  ALOUD

Glistening like eggs of glowing blue glass, eight nodules, each 2 feet (0.6 m) high and half as wide, are positioned within this chamber amid a winding maze of controls, cables, and mechanisms.


Each of these egglike seeds contains an ultraterrestrial consciousness. If a living creature touches a seed, it must make an Intellect defense roll with a difficulty of 5. Failure means the creature becomes host to the consciousness within the seed. Thereafter, every 28 hours, the host must make a new Intellect defense roll. With each failure, the ultraterrestrial gains more control. If the host fails five rolls, the ultraterrestrial assumes total control of the host's body. Its motives are utterly alien and strange, and it has no interest in the host's goals, friends, family, or anything of the sort.

Ridding the host of the ultraterrestrial consciousness is very difficult and probably requires a special device that would need to be constructed (level 5). In Druissi, only the Hozai are likely to have the necessary knowledge.

Destroying the seeds is fairly easy (difficulty 2 task).

AREA 10: LEAKS

The southern doors in areas 7, 8, and 9 all give access to corridors that descend deep into the bowels of the vessel. These in turn lead to a large circular chamber, nearly as big across as the main room and twice as tall. In it is a clear tank that's shaped like a figure eight and about three-quarters full of the same dark orange fluid found in area 6. The liquid slowly seeps through the many fissures and cracks in the walls of the tank.

READ  ALOUD

In the tank, myriad unknown creatures of all sizes and shapes swim frantically around, eyeing you through the translucent material. At the top of the tank, which is open, another creature sits on the edge. It reaches into the liquid with its writhing mass of tentacles and pulls up as many of the swimming creatures as it can grasp, stuffing them into its great mouth. At the sound of your entrance, it stops and turns its attention toward you.

The Beast: The *travonis ul* is a creature of huge appetites that devours everything it can. It managed to get into the vessel through a rent in the hull down here. Is it originally from the ship? Is it simply aroused at the notion of feeding upon creatures from

its own dimension—or is it from somewhere else entirely? The PCs won't know for certain, but one thing is clear: it attacks them hungrily.

The Creatures in the Tank: These swimming creatures ignore the PCs. They are ultraterrestrial in nature and seem wholly alien. Catching one or more (for study, perhaps) is a difficulty 5 task. They are poisonous to eat (level 4 poison that incapacitates the eater for one hour with stomach distress).

The Leaking Tank: The liquid in the tank is toxic. Touching it delivers a level 4 poison that inflicts 4 points of damage per round until the victim makes a successful Might defense roll. Sealing the cracks in the tank is easy with the molecular bonder found in area 7. Otherwise, the repairs are a difficulty 6 task and take ten hours.

The Rest of the Vessel: The PCs can continue to explore the vessel if they wish. They won't find any other creatures from the outside, but the ship might hold all manner of strange wonders—whatever the GM wants to devise.

The Passage Out: Following the flow of liquid from this chamber leads to a hole in the wall, which in turn leads to a massive crack in the fuselage that the PCs can use to reach a burrow created by the *travonis ul*. Following this to the surface takes the characters out of the seedship, well outside of Druissi.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

The residents of Druissi are not happy to hear that the structure on which they've built their town is actually a strange and dangerous vessel. No one will be more distraught than Geirn, if he learns that his wife died while within, although if the PCs learned that she was actually trying to fix the dangerous leaks, and was on the way to succeeding, that will console the grieving husband a bit.

The Hozai are very unhappy that the PCs went inside the ship, and the group attempts to run the characters out of town. The troublemaker Nerr, in particular, looks upon them unkindly. However, the mayor helps the PCs if they agree to do away with Nerr.

If the characters made a deal with Theybis, he keeps his word and builds them a numenera device, but he does so in secret. If need be, the device that he crafts might be the thing that can save any PCs who have become hosts for ultraterrestrial seeds.



CHAPTER 27

THE HIDDEN PRICE



“The Hidden Price” is an adventure for beginning characters that involves a brief exploration of a strange “ruin” followed by urban intrigues. It’s a good adventure to test the characters’ outlook on legality and personal obligations. The adventure takes place in **Mulen**, the capital of **Iscobal**, but it could be transplanted to any medium-size or larger city.

BACKGROUND

People call him Dracogen, but it’s certainly not his real name. A charismatic but unrefined human with a left eye of metal and glass, he came to Mulen twenty years ago at the head of a caravan and established his home in a majestic ruin that the locals claimed was haunted. If it was, he’s shown no sign of it; he prospers and thrives there, using his store of mysterious wealth and technology to help fund the exploits of desperate explorers.

But his help comes with a price. Dracogen is obsessed with the wonders of the old worlds, and after a successful expedition, the explorers must let him examine any numenera they discovered along the way. He owns an extraordinary—perhaps unique—machine that can scan an **artifact** or **cypher** and make a working duplicate. Unfortunately for those who do business with him, Dracogen is likely to keep any remnant that his device can’t copy, and sometimes he asks for an item simply because it catches his eye and he can’t bear to part with the original. Thus, when explorers report back to their patron, they never know if he will take one piece of their numenera, or several, or perhaps all of them. Regardless, most people bite their tongues because they want to stay on his good side; the promise of future funding is a lure few can refuse. If Dracogen discovers that he’s been cheated—and somehow, he always knows—his kind demeanor gives way to a wrath that is subtle and terrible.

This is the story that people know. Unsurprisingly, there is more.

The man known as Dracogen is merely a mouthpiece. The magnificent ruin into which he moved was indeed haunted—by an enormous reptilian creature called the Dracogen, an exile from

its home beyond the stars. The creature called for him, and he came to serve in exchange for immense wealth, lending a human face to its thousand-year scheme. His augmentations bolster his success. His artifact eye can see a person’s recent past, and his secret lattice of subdermal circuitry helps him win people over by subtly affecting their attitudes and reactions.

The Dracogen acts as the leader of the underworld in the city, using the numenera brought back to harry its enemies or keep fractious politicians in line. It’s possible that the creature has put forth mouthpieces in other cities scattered across the Ninth World to gather more numenera and more influence. The Dracogen has solidified its base of power here, but its desires extend far beyond the world’s paltry riches. It plans to storm the gates of its home, returning in bloody and vengeful glory.

SYNOPSIS

The PCs learn of a fabulous treasure they could obtain, but it lies on a floating platform high above the ocean, and they can’t reach it without help. In this case, they meet a willing patron named Dracogen who gives them the supplies they need. They complete their quest and return to Dracogen, who asks them to do something for him in return. When they discover that the task isn’t on the up-and-up, they have to decide what to do next, choosing sides very carefully.

GETTING THE PLAYER CHARACTERS INVOLVED

One of the PCs gets hold of a map that leads to an ancient platform that floats over the ocean. The map describes it as an “unexplored treasure-house” about 50 miles (80 km) off the coast of **Ghan** and about 3,000 feet (914 m) in the air. It’s an exciting opportunity, but the characters don’t have the means to reach the platform. (Few people do, which is why it remains unexplored.)

One night while in Mulen—the closest point to where their map shows to go that is easily reached—they hear of a human who funds expeditions like

Mulen, page 159
Iscobal, page 158

Artifact, page 298
Cypher, page 278

Ghan, page 145





Dracogen, level 7, level 10 for all perception tasks, including seeing through deception, level 8 for persuasion and numenera knowledge; Armor 4; 30 health

theirs. A man named **Dracogen** serves as a sort of patron for explorers. He has vast resources and might be able to give them the assistance they require. The PCs arrange to meet him at his home.

ENCOUNTER 1: PATRONAGE

"I'm here to help," Dracogen tells the PCs. His home is a well-appointed, lavish manor built out of an ancient structure made of strangely shaped but nearly indestructible ceramic and crystal.

"All you have to do is let me examine the treasures you recover. I just want to study them briefly."

That's the deal. If the PCs tell him about the map and the platform, and they agree to his (quite generous) terms, Dracogen assures them that he'll be able to come up with a solution to their problem. It might take a day or two—maybe a bit longer.

Sure enough, three days later, a courier delivers a message to the PCs, wherever they are. Dracogen has procured what they need.

When they meet up again with their new patron, he has four occultic cyphers. These are complex, back-mounted flying packs that sprout small wings when activated. They allow the wearer to fly at about 80 miles (129 km) per hour for up to four hours—enough to get to the platform, spend a short time there, and fly back. If there are more than four PCs, one or more will have to be carried. If there are fewer than four,

Dracogen provides only one cypher per character.

Investigating Dracogen: It's natural for the PCs to distrust Dracogen. At some point, they might try to learn what others have to say about him. If they can find people who know the wealthy patron and are willing to talk (a level 4 task), they discover that he is fairly well regarded, but most people consider him an enigma. If the PCs get their hands dirty and talk to a more nefarious sort, and they are particularly charming or persuasive (a level 7 task), they learn that Dracogen is almost certainly involved in shady and illegal dealings. However, even the local miscreants who know this side of him consider Dracogen to be a man of his word—as well as a ruthless opponent if crossed.

ENCOUNTER 2: THE FLOATING PLATFORM

The flying packs are not particularly maneuverable, but they allow the PCs to move through the air quickly. The journey to the platform is uneventful, although flying around like birds is exciting nonetheless.

So high in the air, the platform is often obscured by low clouds. However, when the PCs arrive, the weather is windy and clear, making the platform visible from far off. As they approach, the characters



see that the platform is approximately 120 feet (37 m) long and 40 feet (12 m) wide. It's mostly flat, with some mysterious structures on the underside and a cone-shaped tower on the top. Once the PCs reach the platform, they can land on it fairly easily. It's wet and slick, but it has plenty of flat space to move around on.

Salt and corrosion covers much of the platform's hull. The PCs easily find a hatch that leads into the cone-shaped structure. The hatch is round and about 6 feet (1.8 m) across, but it is positioned about 5 feet (1.5 m) above the level of the platform, suggesting that it probably wasn't meant for humans. The hatch seems firmly sealed, but opening a smaller panel next to it exposes a round glass plate that glows white. To open the hatch, the correct symbol must be traced on the plate. If a PC looks closely at the plate and succeeds at a level 3 Intellect task, she can make out the lines of the symbol—over many millennia of visitors to the platform, it has been slightly scratched into the glass. If the PCs try to open the hatch a different way, it's a level 6 task.

The Interior: Inside the conical tower is a strange, alien conglomeration of technologies, most of which seem to have controls, interfaces, and inner workings of glass and crystal. Much of the glass is cracked or broken. The interior is dark. Most of the devices are no longer functional, and the few that do work seem to serve no discernible purpose.

The Danger: If anyone roots around inside the tower, part of a massive glass structure near the top of the cone comes loose and crashes to the ground. Anyone in the structure must make a Speed defense roll or suffer 5 points of damage. Sensing this danger ahead of time requires an Intellect roll with a difficulty of 4.

The Payoff: If the PCs spend an hour searching inside the tower, they recover the following:

- 2d6 random cyphers, most of them crystal or glass in form.
- An oddity: a piece of curved broken glass that reacts to sound waves. If set on a smooth surface, it spins and moves at even the softest sound nearby, spinning faster with louder sounds.
- An artifact: an alarm tile. Once activated, this 8-inch (20 cm) glass tile analyzes how many creatures of human size or larger are within long range. For the next twelve hours, the tile changes color if the number of creatures changes. If the number decreases, the tile glows bright blue for one round. If the number increases, the tile glows bright red for one round. It glows as many times as it needs to (never more than once per round) during the twelve-hour period. The artifact has a depletion of 1 in d100.

The Penumbra Fiend: One more danger lurks in the chamber—an intelligence dwells within the crystal and glass machinery. It might be a living creature

uploaded into the devices or an artificially intelligent native. Regardless, it's aware of what happens around it and will travel in any item that the PCs take from this chamber.

From that point onward, the alien intelligence watches and waits. It has limited ability to control light and shadow from within any crystal or glass object, and it begins manipulating events around it, mostly as an experiment. Bright flashes of light or the sudden loss of light are distracting and disorienting, and these seemingly random occurrences hinder the PCs (increasing the difficulty of their tasks by one or even two steps). Sometimes, people and creatures around the PCs will be affected.

Eventually, the intelligence learns to create an energy form of shadow to interact with the normal world.

The Penumbra Fiend

Level 5 (15)

Description: This alien intelligence was once forced to live within glass or crystal, but it can manipulate light, even to the point of creating a body for itself out of light and shadow. The body is like that of a serpentine beast of darkness with a huge maw through which it devours almost anything, but it prefers to eat the soft, easily shredded matter called flesh. The creature must absorb solid matter, or it loses the ability to take solid form.

Motive: Solid matter gives it substance

Health: 18.

Damage Inflicted: 7 points.

Movement: Short.

Modifications: Moves stealthily and hides as level 7.

Combat: The fiend attacks with its terrible bite. It can also control shadow and light to distract foes. If the creature does so without using an action, the difficulty of actions taken by opponents within short range is increased by one step. If it uses an action to focus more intently on controlling shadow and light, the difficulty for all foes within short range is increased by two steps.

However, perhaps far more dramatic is the fiend's ability to become insubstantial. It can't be attacked or affected by corporeal attacks while insubstantial, but it can't attack or affect the corporeal world, either. Further, if it does not regain its solid form within three rounds, the fiend loses its body entirely and can't reform for 1d6 + 1 days.

Rendering the penumbra fiend to 0 health or below destroys its solid form, after which it can't reform for 1d6 + 1 days. The only way to destroy the fiend permanently is to destroy its solid form in utter darkness or blindingly bright light, with no pieces of crystal or glass within short range.

The nature of the penumbra fiend is such that the PCs will likely have more than one encounter with it before eventually figuring out how to destroy it permanently.



Ehvera, level 5; 2 Armor

Ehvera's lackeys, level 2;
1 Armor

Changes in illumination (such as exposure to bright light or extinguishing all light) stuns the creature, making it lose its next turn.

Interaction: If a person somehow establishes communication with the fiend, she finds that it is selfish, spiteful, and paranoid to an almost insane degree.

Use: The penumbra fiend might plague the PCs on and off for a very long time.

GM Intrusion: The fiend creates a bright flash of light that blinds the character for 1d6 rounds.

ENCOUNTER 3: RETURNING TO DRACOGEN

If the PCs return to Mulen and Dracogen, he congratulates them on a job well done and takes what they found to examine and copy it. (He doesn't tell them about the copying device, but he doesn't go out of his way to keep it a secret, either.) The next day, he returns it all to them with a smile. And that would seem to be that.

Crossing Dracogen: If the PCs don't return to their patron or if they try to hide items from him, he sends six **agents** to hunt them down. The agents are instructed to bring the PCs back alive. If they do, Dracogen scolds the characters for crossing him, takes their numenera items to keep, and lets them go with a warning never to go up against him again.

ENCOUNTER 4: YOU OWE ME

Shortly after their conversation with Dracogen, the PCs are contacted again by messenger, asking them to come back to his home. There, he treats them to wine and food and says that since they proved so capable, he has another lucrative job for them. There is a very strong undercurrent to Dracogen's words: *you owe me*. (If the characters angered him earlier, he spins this request as their golden opportunity to get back on his good side.)

He asks them to locate someone who betrayed him—a double-crossing lowlife named Millian who stole a device from his large collection of numenera. Dracogen wants it back. He describes a handheld device made of red metal and blue synth and calls it the revitalizer. He offers to pay the PCs 50 shins for retrieving it from Millian.

ENCOUNTER 5: DIGGING FOR INFORMATION

It's a simple level 2 task to ask around Mulen for a few hours and find out that Millian is a man who lives in a large rental structure called the Challimone Building. His apartment is on the second floor.

However, in the course of their inquiry, the PCs

also learn that someone else—a woman named **Ehvera**—is looking for Millian and a device called the revitalizer. Ehvera is known to be a criminal and has a small force of crooks working for her. Rumor has it that Millian stole the revitalizer from her.

Investigating Ehvera: Following up on the Ehvera rumor (a level 3 interaction task) proves that it's true. If the PCs talk to the right people (either the authorities or other criminals), they also discover that Ehvera is relatively new in the city and is trying to grow her criminal organization, but shadowy forces are working against her.

Confronting Ehvera: If the PCs track down Ehvera, they likely have to fight their way through a group of ten of her lackeys—a rough, disorganized gang of delinquents and drug addicts with knives and clubs. After that scuffle, Ehvera makes an appearance—with eight more lackeys at her back—and offers to talk. The crime boss is a broad, powerful woman with a snarl, a curved blade, and black armor of hardened leather plates. She lays it out plainly for the PCs: Dracogen is the head of Mulen's criminal underworld and is trying to run her out of the city. Apparently, he heard that Millian stole the valuable revitalizer from Ehvera and decided to get it for himself.

The Choice: The PCs now have to choose. Do they work for a criminal and help him obtain an item that doesn't belong to him? Do they betray Dracogen in some way even though he has done nothing but help them?

ENCOUNTER 6: WORKING FOR DRACOGEN

If the PCs choose to do the job for Dracogen, they must go to the Challimone Building and confront Millian (or attempt to break into his apartment when he's not there).

- Climbing the outside walls of the building to get into Millian's window is a level 4 task.
- Breaking down Millian's door or picking the lock is a level 5 task.

Confronting Millian: Millian is a wiry, crooked-nosed man who dresses in garish clothing, which includes an outlandish cape. He probably assumes the PCs are working for Ehvera and isn't going to stick around to chat. He either flees or fights with the help of his brother Graun. Both are level 4. Neither wears armor, but Graun is a burly man with 20 health who inflicts 6 points of damage with whatever he grabs as a weapon—a chair, a lamp, or anything else. Millian has a pair of knives and can attack with both at the same time on the same foe or on two different foes.

In addition, Millian has the revitalizer, which he uses if he gets the chance. He also has a level 5 detonation cypher that creates a cloud of choking gas

Agents, level 4; Armor 1;
level 4 unconsciousness-
inducing poisons



in immediate range, and if need be, he uses it to try to make a getaway. Those who fail a Might defense roll lose their next turn from coughing and are hindered on all actions for three rounds afterward (the difficulty of their actions is increased by two steps).

The Revitalizer: This device restores 1d6 points in one chosen stat Pool. It has a depletion of 1 in 1d10.

Complication: This encounter would be a terrible time for the penumbra fiend to take solid form and attack—the perfect use of GM intrusion.

ENCOUNTER 7: CROSSING DRACOGEN

If the PCs decide to cross Dracogen, they can do so in a number of ways:

1. Simply walk away.
2. Confront Millian, but give the revitalizer to its true owner, Ehvera.
3. Go to the authorities.
4. Confront Dracogen.

In options 1, 2, and 3, Dracogen sends his agents after the characters, as described in Encounter 3. If the PCs chose option 1, the agents express their employer's disappointment and assure the characters that he won't be helping them again. If the PCs chose option 2 or 3, the agents try to bring them back to Dracogen, who intends to force them into doing another job for him to make amends—this time for no payment.

In option 3, the authorities explain that they know who Dracogen is but can't pin any crimes on him. Since all the characters have is the word of Ehvera, a known criminal, they don't have a strong case.

Option 4 is the bravest but perhaps the most dangerous choice for the PCs. Dracogen appreciates their spirit, but he says that he will never help them again. If the characters attempt to coerce or attack him, it provokes a deadly fight. And if the wealthy human is seriously threatened, his master—the alien creature known as the Dracogen—rises up from its hiding place to assist its mouthpiece.

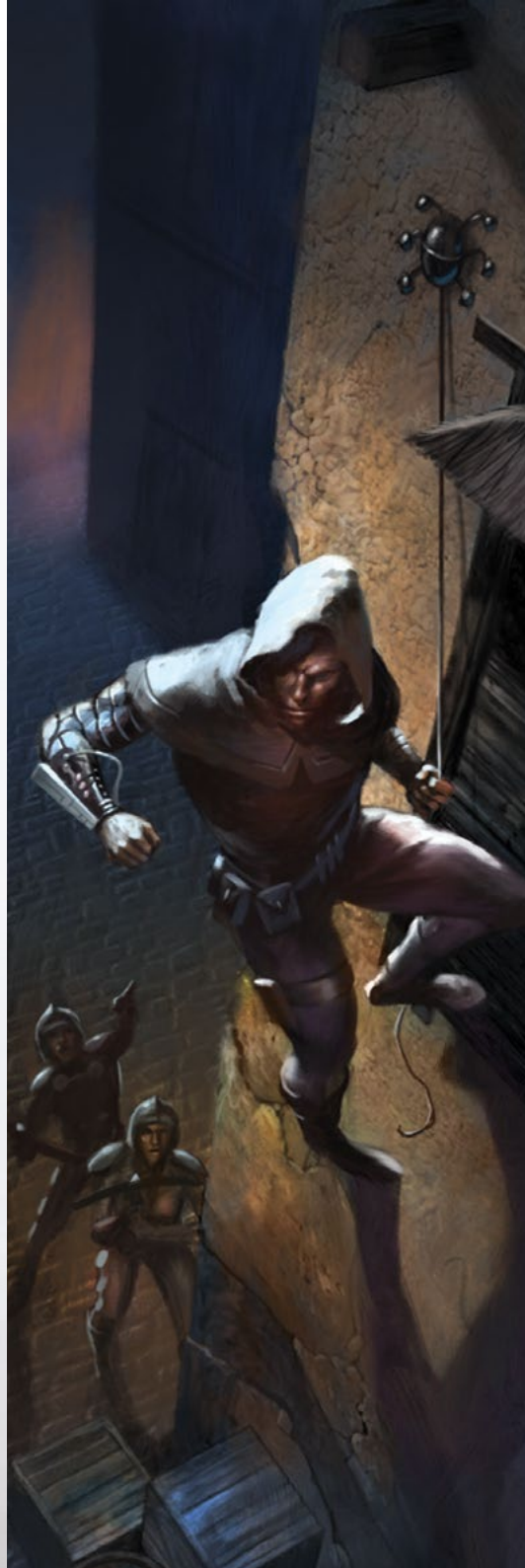
ENDING THE ADVENTURE

If Dracogen is happy at the end of the adventure (meaning that the PCs have dealt with Millian and given the revitalizer to the collector), he continues to give them work whenever they want it and patronizes their other endeavors. He will be an excellent ally going forward, although not an altruistic one. If the PCs end the adventure with Dracogen unhappy, they have lost a valuable ally and might have gained a powerful enemy.

Depending on how events unfolded, Ehvera might be a new potential ally for the PCs or a new enemy

with a grudge. On the other hand, she might be dead, further solidifying Dracogen's underworld reputation—don't cross him.

And, of course, there is always the penumbra fiend to worry about....



The Dracogen (extraterrestrial), level 9; 50 health; 6 Armor; numenera energy weapons that can strike at up to eight targets at long range simultaneously, inflicting 10 points of damage per target; unlimited range telepathy; teleportation with a range of 1000 miles; mind control at long range.

Experience Point Award:

If the PCs discover the truth about Dracogen's alien master, award each of them 3 XP in addition to XP for any artifacts gained. Otherwise, use your discretion as to whether their actions seemed to merit XP awards.





CHAPTER 28

THREE SANCTUMS

Artifact, page 298
The Steadfast, page 136

Convergence, page 223

“Three Sanctums” is a very loose adventure to be used with characters who are not just starting out. In fact, it’s fairly important that they have discovered at least one numenera **artifact** of some power.

In the northern **Steadfast**, an organization of scholars and nanos schemes to harness a vast power source before they are discovered by the rest of the world. This group calls itself the **Convergence**, and its members are ruthless in their pursuit of knowledge and power. The PCs learn of this organization and must stop its mad plot to harness the energy of an entire star.

BACKGROUND

The Convergence is an affiliation of nanos and scholars interested in gathering personal power through use of ancient secrets.

About five years ago, one of its members, the magister Corlim Varness, made an amazing discovery. At some point in one of the prior worlds, ancient scientists created a chamber that was larger on the inside than the outside. Although this kind of spatial warping was interesting, it had been seen before. What was truly remarkable was the size of the chamber’s interior. From one end to the other, the chamber’s width stretches hundreds of times the distance between the Earth and the sun—approximately 160 billion miles (260 billion km). What’s more, the ancients placed an entire star at the center of this chamber—a red giant once called Antares.

Corlim quickly set upon determining a way to use this discovery to his advantage. Before he could find one, he died under mysterious circumstances. A team of other magisters, however, developed a complex machine that bends space to tap directly into the heart of this captive star. This machine, called the Venerator, requires human minds to conduct its processes, so the Convergence has been kidnapping people to incorporate into the device. The group has started using its own slaves for this purpose as well. This process has been difficult and many mistakes have been made, so they have contacted Mnoma, another magistrix of the Convergence, who is an expert on the fusion of flesh and machine.

CONVERGENCE MEMBERS

The PCs are likely to encounter many Convergence members in this adventure, as well as guards and other servants of the organization. Unless directed otherwise, use the “Typical Convergence Magister/Magistrix” stats for all members, although the GM is encouraged to make each individual as unique as possible.

Typical Convergence Magister/Magistrix

Level 5 (15)

Description: Convergence magisters and magistrixes typically wear hooded robes and a heavy medallion bearing their eyelike symbol.

Motive: Understanding the lore of the past to gain personal power

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Resists mental effects as level 6.

Combat: Each magister has an artifact called a terrorizer. It emits a long-range ray that inflicts 4 points of damage. However, it also wracks living targets with incredible pain. Those struck by the ray must make a Might defense roll or lose their next turn, consumed in pain. A terrorizer has a depletion of 1 in 1d10.

Special: Ability to do one or more of the following: levitate 20 feet (6.1 m) per round via an antigravity esotery or device, turn invisible for one minute via a distortion field, or gain 4 Armor for ten minutes via a force field.

Interaction: Convergence members share one thing in common—they are power mad and ruthless in their pursuits. Some are more than willing to talk, barter, or negotiate. Few actually enjoy conflict.

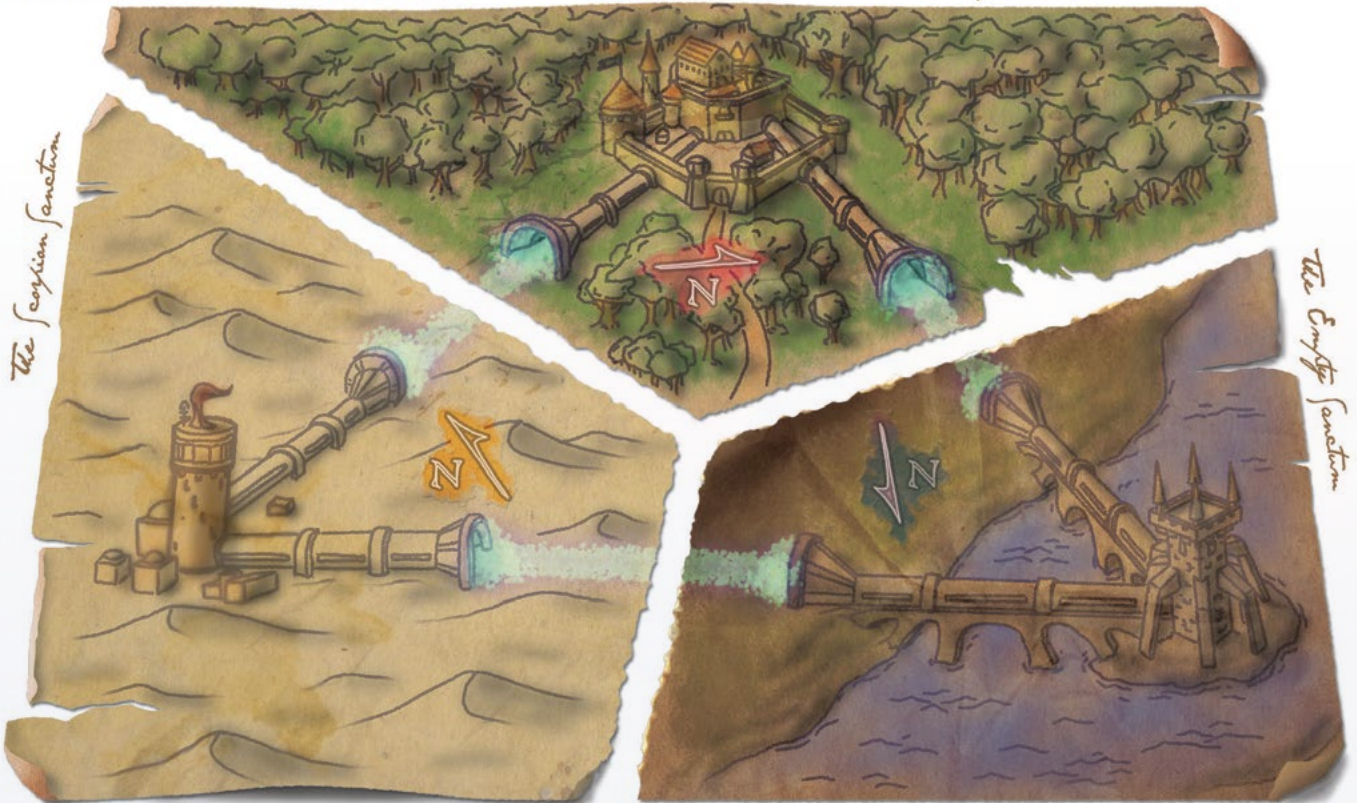
Use: The Convergence is made up of perfect Ninth World villains. They are knowledgeable masterminds with secret lore and no ethical restraint.

Loot: A Convergence magister or magistrix typically has 3d6 shins, 1d6 cyphers, an oddity, an artifact, a wide variety of tools, and perhaps other normal gear.



Three Sanctums

The Golden Sanctum



Magistrix Mnoma

Level 5 (15)

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 5

Movement: Short

Modifications: Resists mental effects as level 6.

Combat: Mnoma has synthsteel plating that covers most of her body. Unlike other Convergence members, she does not carry a terrorizer, and she likes hand-to-hand combat. She has synthsteel claws built into her hands. The claws contain poison reserves; each successful attack also requires a victim to make a Might defense roll or move down one step on the damage track. After three successful poisonous attacks, the reserves are empty.

Interaction: Mnoma is brusque but polite. If her temper is raised, she shows no mercy.

Loot: Mnoma has 23 shins, three random cyphers, and a random oddity.

Typical Convergence Guard

Level 2 (6)

Description: Convergence guards wear light breastplates and synth helmets. They serve their masters well because they are paid well and are promised greater power and influence in the future. Ultimately, they do what they are ordered to do by their superiors, regardless of legality or morality.

Motive: Protecting the interests of the Convergence

Health: 8

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Senses hiding and sneaking foes as level 3.

Combat: Typically armed with spears and crossbows, Convergence guards are straightforward combatants. They appreciate strength in numbers and, if possible, always call out for help when needed. They rarely fight to the death.

Interaction: Convergence guards are typically suspicious but not always efficient or wise. Most are cruel, arrogant, and selfish.

Use: Convergence guards watch over the magisters and magistrixes of the Convergence and their laboratories, workshops, and strongholds.

Loot: Any given guard has 2d6 shins in addition to weapons, armor, and basic gear.

Feral

Level 4 (12)

Description: The Convergence has created a viral serum that temporarily recodes the DNA of humans to give them animal-like qualities. The subjects treated with this serum are called the Feral. Although their appearances vary somewhat, while affected by the serum, most have physical changes—prodigious hair, animal-like eyes, pronounced ears, snout-like protrusions of the lower skull, and so on. The longer a feral has been taking the serum, the more pronounced these features have become.

Motive: Protecting the interests of the Convergence

Health: 16

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Long

Modifications: Senses hiding and sneaking foes as level 5; stealth actions as level 5; climbing and jumping as level 5.

Combat: Feral attack with their claws and sharp teeth. When a Feral suffers 6 points of damage or more, it goes into a ferocious frenzy, during which time it attacks and defends as level 5 and inflicts 2 additional points of damage per attack. This frenzy lasts until the current combat is over or the Feral is dead or unconscious.

Interaction: Feral do not speak, but they understand the *Truth*.

Use: Feral lead groups of Convergence guards, issuing commands by pointing, growling, or simply expecting the guards to follow them into battle. If conversation must happen, they let a guard handle it.

Loot: Each Feral has a dose of the serum. If a human is injected with the serum, he gains the following for 28 hours:

- Training in perceiving, stealth, climbing, and jumping
- Claws and sharp teeth that allow them to inflict +2 damage with unarmed attacks
- Fur and other animalistic appearance changes

ANTARES

Antares is a red supergiant star, once one of the brightest stars in Earth's sky. It was sometimes called the Heart of the Scorpion. The members of the Convergence, however, call the star Bilu-sha-ziri, the Lord of the Seed. They believe that it's the key to attaining godlike power.

The radius of Antares is 883 times that of the sun, and it is 10,000 times as luminous. It once had a companion star, Antares B. That star is also entirely gone from the night sky. Neither has ever been in the sky of the Ninth World.

SYNOPSIS

The player characters meet a mysterious woman named Mnoma. They learn of the Convergence and its plan to achieve godlike power from something called Bilu-sha-ziri. Mnoma steals an object from the PCs and they follow her, getting involved in the Convergence's plot. First they travel to the so-called Empty Sanctum and discover a space-warping conduit that connects to the group's other strongholds. They can visit the Golden Sanctum, but that way leads only to trouble. The real threat lies at the Scorpion Sanctum, where Mnoma and her cohorts work on a diabolical machine called the Venerator. The PCs must deactivate the machine before the Convergence activates it.

GETTING THE PLAYER CHARACTERS INVOLVED

The adventure as written begins in the city of *Charmonde*, but it can be used in any city in the Steadfast where the PCs happen to be. In this city dwells a woman named Mnoma.

Many people around town know who Mnoma is, but few know much about her. She is a biomechanical hybrid, part machine and part human. As an expert in the numenera, she constantly attempts to upgrade and improve her mechanical parts. She secretly belongs to the Convergence, sharing her knowledge in exchange for the group's resources. When other members began building the Venerator, they consulted with Mnoma for her expertise in fusing organic and inorganic systems. With the machine so close to completion, they have asked her to join them at the Scorpion Sanctum. Thus, Mnoma is preparing to leave *Charmonde*.

The PCs come in contact with her because they're interested in her knowledge. Perhaps they need her to identify something, they have a question about the numenera, or they need some kind of device that she possesses. Even though Mnoma is getting ready to leave town, she agrees to meet with them to get some last-minute funds. Their meeting is Encounter 1.

Alternatively, getting the PCs to the Empty Sanctum will involve them in the adventure, although it means skipping Encounter 1. If you want to use this option, there are many ways to do it. Here are a few.

Kidnapped Son: Cherle Mengris has lost her son. She lives in the village of Brookhaven, near *Charmonde*. Her son, Aanor, disappeared three nights ago while tending his flock of oorics (large, flightless, wooly birds). While passing through town, the PCs run across Cherle, who asks them to try to find her son. Signs of a struggle and tracks lead the characters to the Empty Sanctum. Aanor has been taken by Convergence members through the conduit to the Scorpion Sanctum (to power the Venerator).

Charmonde, page 138

Truth, page 133

"Bilu-sha-ziri, the Lord of the Seed" is the ancient Mesopotamian name for Antares. It's used here not to imply a literal connection between the Convergence and that ancient culture, but rather because it has the right "feel" in this context. The connection between them and the research they've done on Antares could be very loosely equated to the relationship people in the 21st century have with ancient Mesopotamia. It's mysterious, sketchy, and strange. Ultimately, it's just an exotic sounding name. Or perhaps it's as good a translation from the name they actually use as any.



Kidnapping Attempt: The PCs are traveling along the northwestern slopes of the **Black Riage** when they are attacked by seven Convergence warriors looking for victims to take to the Empty Sanctum, and from there to the Venerator in the Scorpion Sanctum. The PCs likely fend off their assailants and have little trouble determining that they came from the Empty Sanctum. Looking for payback or simply more information, the characters are drawn into events there.

Exploring the Sanctum: In this scenario, the PCs hear about the Empty Sanctum as a location where “some wizards” once holed up, but it is vacant now. They determine that it might be interesting or profitable to explore such a place.

ENCOUNTER 1: HYBRID'S EYE

When the PCs contact Mnoma, she agrees to meet them in a public cafe in the middle of the afternoon. This is standard for her—she's a bit paranoid about meeting new people.

Mnoma is of medium height, and her body has a dark synth shell that covers almost everything except her face. Her eyes glow faintly of turquoise. She is attractive but in a very deliberate, artificial way.

She speaks in an accent that's difficult to place. Her manner is brusque but polite. Time is clearly of the essence to her. You can have the players roll dice to conduct the interaction if you wish, but as long as the PCs pay her and are halfway polite, she does not react poorly. Whatever the PCs want, Mnoma might be willing to do, but she wants to get it done quickly. She doesn't explain why.

While they talk, Mnoma notices a device in the possession of one of the PCs. The item is of some value and importance to the character. Mnoma can be subtle if she wants to, but her gaze falls often on that particular PC and his device. It is a level 5 task to notice her behavior and exactly what she is looking at.

At some point during their interaction, use **GM intrusion** to allow Mnoma to take the item. She exclaims, “That's exactly what we need. This will complete the device!” Then she grabs the item from the PC and uses a cypher to teleport away. The cypher sends her only a short distance, but it should be enough for her to get away. It is important that Mnoma succeeds because her theft is the prime motivation for the player characters to hate her and to believe that she is untrustworthy and amoral. A dislike for Mnoma will carry them far in this adventure.

Mnoma's Home: Obviously, it's difficult for the PCs to follow her directly after she teleports away, but learning where she lives by asking around is a level 3 task. Her home is a second-floor apartment in a building of wood and stone. She's not at home when the PCs arrive, and the door is locked. Opening the

door is a level 4 task, whether that means busting it down or picking the lock.

The apartment is filled with various tools, parts, books, and furniture. However, a search reveals that almost everything of value has been taken. Mnoma has no intention of returning here again.

The PCs can search her home as much as they want, and they discover 1d6 random cyphers amid the junk. However, they also find a birdcage near the window. This is where Mnoma kept her messenger swelth, a swift and intelligent bird commonly used to carry messages. Next to the cage are a few leather message holders that she tied to the swelth's leg and some blank strips of paper. On the other side of the cage is a bowl with slips of paper—messages that Mnoma has received. Many of these appear to be technical, and even characters who are knowledgeable about the numenera can't make much out of them without any context. Two messages are of particular importance. The first reads, “If this plan succeeds, and the Venerator works, Bilu-sha-ziri will make us powerful beyond the dreams of man.”

The other reads, “The simplest way is to travel using the conduit in the Empty Sanctum.”

After reading all the messages, the PCs can attempt a level 6 Intellect task to realize that whomever Mnoma was communicating with, they were talking about some kind of process involving vast amounts of energy and living human brains.

Her apartment has nothing else of importance.

Further Investigation: Inquiry with other knowledgeable sources such as the city library or the Aeon Priests reveals that Bilu-sha-ziri means “the Lord of the Seed” in a long-forgotten language. However, the name has a particular meaning in more obscure circles. Bilu-sha-ziri is the source of ultimate power, a part of a prophecy whispered by fringe thinkers and people thought to be crackpots. The idea holds that the ancients must have had power sources beyond reckoning to accomplish their wonders, and such an energy source might still exist. If it were found, those who could harness it would be like unto gods. At this point, the PCs hopefully feel that Mnoma is the last person they want to see obtain that kind of power.

The characters can also learn that the Empty Sanctum was the demesne of a cabal of self-styled wizards called the Convergence, but as its name suggests, the place is now empty. (This last “fact” is incorrect.) Still, the sanctum is the only solid clue



Black Riage, page 177

GM intrusion, page 88



Through luck or careful action, it's entirely possible that the PCs might skip Encounters 2, 3, and 4. That's okay. If you like the Kallithak or the Golden Sanctum, you can always involve them in a future scenario.

Mysterious, murderous data cloud, level 9

Norbrun, level 3, level 1 for all physical actions

that they have regarding Mnoma's whereabouts, so they probably head there.

Alternative Investigation: If the PCs don't go to Mnoma's home after she steals their item and teleports away, general investigation might reveal the rumor that she was planning to leave town soon. Not many people knew her well, she didn't have any close friends, and she lived alone. If the PCs can't find any leads that take them to her home and the clues therein, diligent characters eventually discover a traveling merchant who spoke with Mnoma and gave her directions to the Empty Sanctum.

ENCOUNTER 2: THE EMPTY SANCTUM'S GUARDIAN

The journey to the Empty Sanctum is likely to be swift and uneventful. The stronghold is not difficult to find—a tall stone tower rises up from an island in the Wyr River. Massive pipelines and tubes (with hundreds of accompanying cables, power cells, and junction boxes) run away from the tower in two directions at about a 45-degree angle from each other. Each conduit ends at a metal and glass archway. The conduits pass through the archways but don't come out the other side.

No one seems to be around, as befits the name and description of the place. Of course, the Empty Sanctum isn't empty at all. It is guarded by a being called the Kallithak, a part-organic, part-machine monstrosity that floats in the air and has bristly blades and razor-sharp flails. If the PCs approach the tower, the Kallithak comes out and attacks them without warning or hesitation. It fights to the death.

The Kallithak

Level 5 (15)

Health: 24

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Long

Modifications: Resists physically based attacks (poisons, disease, and so on) as level 7. Resists mental attacks as level 4.

Combat: Can make four attacks in one round, though each must be against a different opponent.

The Singularity: The entrance to the tower is not locked. The Empty Sanctum's name actually comes from the interior. The Convergence has created a dangerous singularity that absorbs all matter and energy, but it's contained in a huge cylindrical vessel that occupies most of the tower. The vessel manipulates the singularity and draws vast power from it. The conduits that join all three

towers are used to transfer this power. That's the way the sanctums work—in each, the magisters and magistrixes attempt to gather energy, and then it is shared among the three locations to fuel greater devices, experiments, and schemes. In fact, that's one of the main purposes of the Convergence—to share knowledge and have access to a source of great power. Separately, the group's members would probably never be able to tap into such energy for their work. At the moment, the singularity produces most of the power used by the Convergence. If the plan to activate the Venerator succeeds, that power will dwarf what the singularity generates.

Recently, however, something *came out* of the singularity. Ignoring trivial things like matter and physical laws, it exited the vessel and slew many of the members, guards, and slaves in the Sanctum. The rest fled. This creature—a sort of living **data cloud** that doesn't fully exist in a material sense but that causes brain hemorrhages in anyone who comes near—has since wandered off. For reasons unknown, the Kallithak was unaffected by it.

ENCOUNTER 3: HIDDEN SLAVE

Hiding in the tower is the shattered remains of a former slave named **Norbrun**. Beaten and mistreated for years, he now walks with a hunched limp, and only one of his arms is still useful. He is terrified all the time, although he fears pain far more than death. Succor will win Norbrun over, with food and drink loosening his tongue.

Norbrun was a slave kept by the Convergence, forced to work in the Empty Sanctum to help build the conduit system that links the three strongholds. He was present when the creature came out of the singularity and can tell the PCs what he saw. (Going after the data cloud is beyond the scope of this adventure.) He can also explain the setup of the three sanctums. Norbrun can even produce what he calls “the three-piece map” and show how, even though the conduits don't seem to point in the right directions, they bend space so that the three sanctums link up to form a perfect equilateral triangle—just not in three-dimensional space.

Not long ago, Norbrun also saw Mnoma arrive (although he doesn't know her name). She ignored the tower altogether and went right to a conduit, but he doesn't remember which one. One conduit leads to the Golden Sanctum and the other to the Scorpion Sanctum. Unless the PCs can jog Norbrun's memory, read his mind, or the like, they have a 50/50 chance of correctly guessing which conduit will lead them to Mnoma.



ENCOUNTER 4: THE GOLDEN SANCTUM

If the PCs travel to the Golden Sanctum, they find that it is well staffed and guarded. Although it's the most remote of the three sanctums, it's also the largest and most heavily occupied. However, most of the inhabitants are focused on their own plots and schemes, and they have nothing to do with Mnoma or the Venerator at the Scorpion Sanctum. If the characters don't realize that they've come to the wrong place, they can get into a lot of trouble here.

The Golden Sanctum is nestled in the **Westwood**, with no paths or roads leading to it. The sanctum is a walled fortress with an inner keep and many buildings. The walls of the stronghold, 35 feet (10.7 m) high and 9 feet (2.7 m) thick, are stone reinforced with metal. Guards patrol the walls and protect the main gate in two small towers. The fortress has four other watchtowers as well. All towers are equipped with numenera ray emitters that have a range of 200 feet (61 m) and inflict 7 points of damage.

The sanctum has fifty-eight convergence guards, nine Feral, and twenty magisters/magistrixes. The leader is Dieva Knull, a magistrix with a wandlike device that transforms organic matter to a gaseous state at long range (inflicting 8 points of damage). She has forged an uneasy alliance with Westwood's most dangerous inhabitants, the **culovas**, which keeps the sanctum relatively safe and quiet.

The guards watch the conduit entrances closely. PCs arriving in the Golden Sanctum are intercepted unless they have particularly impressive stealth capabilities. Six guards are likely to be on the spot quickly, and they won't hesitate to call for reinforcements if they need it. However, the guards don't attack immediately—they simply demand to know who the PCs are and how they got access to the conduit system. They attempt to capture anyone who doesn't have a good answer, and, if threatened, they respond with deadly force. The guards don't chase intruders who pass back out through the conduit or flee into the woods. In the latter case, they assume the culovas will take care of the trespassers. And that seems likely—characters wandering into the woods quickly encounter six culovas, and shortly thereafter, they are confronted by ten more.

ENCOUNTER 5: ARRIVAL AT THE SCORPION SANCTUM

The conduit places the PCs in the desert outside the Scorpion Sanctum. When the PCs arrive, the fortress is under attack. **Chirog abhumans** are a common



threat in this area and raid the sanctum now and again, interested mainly in food but occasionally in equipment. Fortunately for the PCs, the attack means that their arrival goes unnoticed.

The sanctum consists of a tall tower of brown desert stone and five outbuildings used for storage, stables for pack animals, and a guard barracks. The tower houses the Venerator and serves as living quarters for the magisters.

The leader of the Scorpion Sanctum is Magister Iom, a man with a fondness for the popular belief that nanos and others skilled in the ways of numenera are wizards who wield sorcery. He dresses the part, with a long, wiry beard, voluminous robes, and a strange, domed hat with the Convergence symbol on it.

Besides Iom and Mnoma, there is currently only one other full Convergence member in the sanctum—a magistrix named Juthes.

Westwood, page 137

Culova, page 236

Chirog, page 235





Dealing with Iom should really feel like dealing with a mad wizard from a traditional fantasy story. He rambles, cackles, and occasionally gets distracted by things of which the PCs aren't aware. He might occasionally speak in riddles or rhymes.

The Fight: At the moment, eight guards and a Feral work to drive off a dozen chiorgs trying to get into the storage building. Within a few rounds, six more guards come out of the barracks to reinforce their comrades. (There are four more guards in the barracks, but they won't be ready and equipped for another four rounds.) If left alone, the guards and the Feral are victorious, killing five of the chiorgs and driving the rest away, but only after losing three of their number. If the PCs get involved in the fight, anything could happen.

Getting Into the Tower: If the PCs use the battle as a distraction, they can attempt to get inside the tower. The stone door is locked (level 5 task to pick the lock; level 7 task to break down the door). Opening the door by any means without wearing one of the guards' rings sets off a numenera sensor that alerts Iom, Juthes, and Mnoma of intruders. It also releases a cloud of poison gas (level 4). This gas instills a sense of extreme paranoia and fear. Those affected are likely to shout or scream, distrust their closest friends, and run and hide if confronted in any way. These effects last for one minute.

Tower Interior: The levels of the tower are connected by staircases that hug the outer walls. The main level of the tower and those immediately above it hold only a little of interest to the PCs. Rooms on these levels include:

- A storeroom for sensitive machine components (1d6 random cyphers can be found here after a careful search)
- Ten bedchambers for Convergence members (seven are currently unused)
- A library with many books about the numenera
- A kitchen, dining room, and communal area
- An administrative office, which contains notes penned by Iom summarizing the plan to tap into Bilu-sha-ziri to gain almost limitless power

ENCOUNTER 6: A MOUNTED DEFENSE

When the PCs ascend to the penultimate level of the tower, they find a round, open chamber 60 feet (18 m) across where six Convergence guards and two Feral stand watch. Each of these defenders stands on a glass platform that floats inches above the floor. The stairway from the level below brings the PCs into the westernmost side of the round room. The stairway up to the top level is in the easternmost side of the room.

The Floor: The floor is covered in a metallic grid that pulses with energy. Anyone touching it is jolted with power and stunned, losing her next turn. The jolt is a level 4 attack, and characters can resist it with a Might defense roll, but they must do so each round.



The Platform: The glass platform is 12 feet (3.7 m) across and has a crystalline pedestal that houses simple controls to turn the metallic grid on and off. The controls also move the platform a short distance in a round. Both of these functions require an action. The platform does not float or move if the floor is not powered. If a PC scavenges the pedestal and makes an Intellect-based roll (difficulty 5), she finds a cypher: a handheld crystalline device that produces a force field around one character for ten minutes, granting her +3 to Armor.

The Guards: At first, they make ranged attacks on intruders. Then they move the platform in for a ramming attack that inflicts 3 points of damage to anyone in their way and knocks foes prone. (Use the controlling guard's level for the attack.) They fight to the death.

Careful PCs: If the PCs entered the tower without tripping the alarm and reached this level quickly and quietly, the guards will be standing on the platform, but the floor won't be activated.

ENCOUNTER 7: THE VENERATOR

The top level of the Scorpion Sanctum tower holds the Venerator as well as the access to Bilu-sha-ziri. Like the level below, this level is a round, open chamber 60 feet (18 m) across.

The Machine: The Venerator is a huge device of metal and glass, 15 feet (4.6 m) high and shaped roughly like a pyramid. Cables run from it across the room to another device, which seems to be a perfect cube of utter blackness, 11 feet (3.4 m) to a side. The Venerator uses the processing power of human brains to handle the extremely complex function of drawing energy from the star.

Inflicting 20 points of damage on the machine will destroy it forever. Iom and Juthes would need many years to build a new one, and if either is slain, its secrets die with them. Ransacking the machine for parts produces 1d6 + 2 random cyphers.

The Victims: Eighteen people are currently strapped onto metallic platforms around the machine, but there is room for twice that many. Cords and tubes are plugged into the victims, pumping fluid and energy in and out of their bodies. Most of these keep the victims alive but in a near-vegetative state. The cords connected to the victims' brains are heavy data cables. Freeing a victim involves removing his connections. Doing so without harming the victim is an Intellect action with a difficulty of 4. Failure means that the victim suffers greatly and collapses into a coma. Victims successfully freed are very weak, but they can stand and move with a bit of help, although they cannot speak. After a full day's rest, they are

stronger and more capable, but they likely need a week to recover fully.

The Magister: Iom maintains the machine here. If he hears the PCs coming (via the alarm or the sounds of battle on the level below), he activates a cypher that sits on his shoulder like a small mechanical dragon. Once per round, in addition to his own actions, this level 5 "creature" can spit fire up to short range at a single target, inflicting 5 points of damage that ignores physical armor.

Iom is not immediately hostile. He does not relish combat and attempts to bribe the PCs into leaving him and his machine alone. He offers them 100 shins and the following:

- An oddity: a glass that turns any liquid poured into it into a cold, sweet drink
- A cypher: a pill that restores all stat Pools to their maximum (takes effect ten minutes after the pill is swallowed)
- An artifact: a device similar to a spyglass that makes anything up to 5 miles (8 km) distant appear as if it were in short range if the viewer has line of sight to it; depletion 1 in 1d100.

If the PCs agree to the bribe, they don't get the payment until they leave the tower. It will be delivered to them by a guard.

Bargaining With Iom: The PCs might try to bargain with the magister. If they do, keep the following in mind:

- Iom will not explain the Venerator or anything else—not even under threat of death.
- Initially, Iom refuses to free any victims hooked up to the machine, but characters who use persuasion or intimidation might get him to free one, five, or all of the captives. Iom will agree to the latter only under threat of death.
- If the PCs are interested mainly in getting revenge on Mnoma, Iom gladly betrays her. He will go get her under false pretenses and then "give" her to the PCs, even helping to subdue her.
- Iom won't willingly allow the PCs into Bilu-sha-ziri. If the PCs agree to some kind of arrangement, Iom attempts to keep his side of the bargain.

Fighting Iom: If the PCs attack the magister, the round after the fight begins, all the remaining guards from outside the tower rush up the stairs, having been secretly summoned by Iom via telepathy either when the alarm was tripped or when he first saw the PCs. Iom won't fight to the death, but the only place for him to flee is Bilu-sha-ziri.

The Cube: The cube is the chamber that holds Bilu-sha-ziri. Its walls are intangible, and characters can easily pass through them into the much larger chamber inside (though getting back out is another

The Venerator's victims present a real challenge to altruistic PCs. If rescued, they still very likely need help getting home. Aanor Mengris (page 392) is of course among them, and he would like to get back to Charmonde.



The item Mnoma stole from the PC at the beginning of the adventure is now incorporated into the device here. It cannot be restored.

matter). Even passing partially through the walls of the cube draws one entirely inside it.

ENCOUNTER 8: BILU-SHA-ZIRI

When viewed from the outside, the black cube appears to be about 11 feet (3.4 m) to a side, but the interior is many times larger than the orbit of Pluto. Upon entering the chamber, the PCs stand almost 80 billion miles (129 billion km) from Antares—almost 900 times farther than a person on the Earth's surface is from the sun. However, Antares is 883 times the size of the sun and far, far brighter. So, despite the distance, the red, glowing orb appears about the size of the sun and is far too bright to look at directly.

The entire chamber has a reddish cast. The floor appears to be made of the same black material as the outside of the cube, except that it is solid and extremely smooth. The sides are no longer nearby, of course—they are 80 billion miles away. So no obvious way to leave presents itself.

The cables that run from the Venerator into this chamber seem to come up through the floor just a few feet from where the characters appear. They connect to a metallic pyramid that is similar to the Venerator but without the living people connected to it. Two figures tend this machine—Mnoma and Juthes.

Juthes has long dark hair and a scar running down her left cheek. She wears a number of hidden devices and implants that grant her an electrical protective field (4 Armor) and the ability to shock with a touch (inflicting 6 points of damage).

The Magistrixes: If the PCs enter the chamber, Mnoma and Juthes assume that the intruders are hostile and that Iom is dead. Thus, they attack immediately. Juthes fights to the death, but Mnoma does not. Instead, if faced with an overwhelming force, she bargains for her life with the most valuable commodity she has—the secret of how to leave this chamber.

The Pyramid: This pyramid is the absorbing device. It bends space to tap directly into the heart of Antares and transmits that energy to the Venerator in the Scorpion Sanctum, where the power is managed through the human minds. At least, that's the theory. None of it functions yet. Mnoma used parts from the artifact she stole from the PCs to help build the pyramid.

Inflicting 20 points of damage on the machine will destroy it forever. Iom and Juthes would need many years to build a new one, and if either is slain, its secrets die with them. Ransacking the machine for parts produces 1d6 + 2 random cyphers.

Exploring the Chamber: To say that the interior of

this chamber is vast is a dramatic understatement. The entire surface of the world would be a tiny speck on the floor or the wall. Although the chamber looks empty from where the characters initially appear, there could be entire cities or civilizations within the room (though it would take more than an explorer's lifetime to reach them). On the other hand, the room might be as empty as it seems.

Getting Out of the Chamber: The trick to leaving the chamber lies in the cables that connect to the Venerator. The magistrixes have attached a small, hidden device beneath them. When activated, this device transfers people back to the top of the Scorpion Sanctum tower, more or less sliding them along the cables.

Standard teleport technology would also work, assuming it has the range to reach the sanctum. Most likely, interplanetary range is needed.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure comes to a close after the PCs take their revenge on Mnoma, end the Convergence's plan, or both—or neither. Mnoma is a latecomer to the group and knows only a few of the details of the process, but if the PCs leave Iom and Juthes alive, they continue their schemes to tap into Antares and use the power for their own ends. Destroying the machines sets them back, but not forever. Of course, they must also decide what to do with the almost limitless energy at their disposal, but in only a short time, they could create terrifying, reality-altering devices that would make them like gods.

If Iom, Juthes, or both are slain and the Venerator is destroyed, it is unlikely to be recreated. However, the Convergence might attempt to use Bilu-sha-ziri and its vast chamber for other schemes. Only very special transdimensional devices can move the cube, and no force yet known in the Ninth World can damage or alter it.

If the PCs stopped the Convergence's plans, they will have earned powerful, lifelong enemies.

Experience Point Award:

For the discoveries made in this adventure (the conduit system between sanctums, the Venerator, and Bilu-sha-ziri), award 1 XP to each PC in addition to XP for any artifacts gained. If the characters also discovered the singularity, award an additional 1 XP to each PC.

